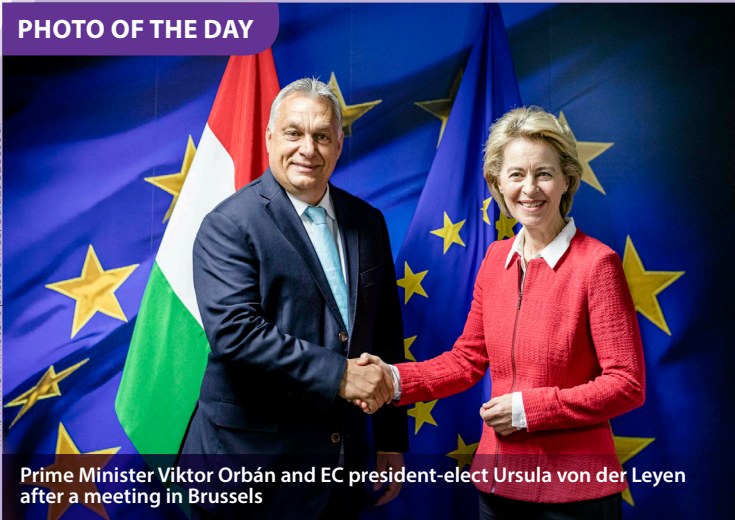


PHOTO OF THE DAY



Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and EC president-elect Ursula von der Leyen after a meeting in Brussels

UPCOMING EVENTS

Memorial Day of Roma Holocaust marked

Stats office releases data on June retail prices

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: DECISION TO BACK VON DER LEYEN 'GOOD'

It was a good decision to “keep the ideological guerrillas away” and vote for leaders who have a “pragmatic instinct for life”, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said after meeting European Commission EC President-elect Ursula von der Leyen.

“We have come to a good decision, so far,” Orbán told public television. He called Von der Leyen a politician “whose ideas for the future coincide with the same issues that concern us”. He cited security and the future of children and families as examples, adding that the development of a European military and arms industry were shared goals. Von der Leyen has a sensitive approach to issues such as migration, and she has demonstrated that she can also “think with the head of a central European”, Orbán added.

“We’ll see what happens,” Orbán said, adding that the chance of achieving “sensible solutions” was higher than in the past and better than had any other candidate for the EC post been selected. Orbán qualified Thursday’s meeting as “successful”. Von der Leyen, he added, was “passionate” about the European Union’s survival and “instinctively” rejected any issue that divided member states. “We also want the various European Union countries to be brought together so that every country should remain as they are, Hungary could stay as Hungary,” he said.

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ORBÁN: PRAGMATIC APPROACH LIKELY

Pragmatic approaches to tough issues such as climate change, energy, economic policy and migration are likely, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said after meeting European Commission EC President-elect Ursula von der Leyen, adding that debates over migration were expected to be more “meaningful” in the future. Orbán said Von der Leyen understood the gaps between the approaches of western Europeans and central Europeans. The former are concerned with integrating migrants while central Europe is unwilling to create a multicultural society, he added. The prime minister said that Von der Leyen at the same time considered this should not form the central plank of the debate, but rather important matters should be discussed in which a positive outcome could be expected, such as border protection and procedures for migrants while the applicant is still outside EU territory, he said. They agreed at today’s meeting that migrants should not be released into the EU while they are awaiting a decision on asylum. Rather, a humane solution should be found that ensures the safety of citizens. Also, they agreed that migrants who come to the EU illegally should be sent home, he said.

On the subject of climate change, Orbán said they shared the view that humanity shares common responsibility for the future. But whereas rich countries

“can make serious statements on this issue”, a country the size of Hungary should only make commitments that it can keep. Hungary, he added, has undertaken to source 90% of its energy needs carbon-free by 2030.

Orbán added that Hungary is “under pressure” to say it will achieve zero carbon emissions by 2050. “I don’t see the chance [to make such a commitment] now,” he said, adding that he would not rule out making such a commitment in the future. Whereas there is a goal, no substantive plan as yet exists, “so we would be talking about this irresponsibly”. New and expensive technologies are needed, he said, adding that the EU should finance part of the related costs.

Meanwhile, the prime minister said the issue of Hungary’s EU commissioner-designate had arisen at the meeting and he told Von der Leyen that László Trócsányi had topped the ruling Fidesz party’s list, and because people had been promised that Trócsányi would be Hungary’s next commissioner if they voted for the Fidesz list, this should be the case.

COE: HUNGARY COMPLIES WITH SEVERAL COE ANTI-CORRUPTION RECOMMENDATIONS

Hungary has complied with several of the recommendations of the Council of Europe’s anti-corruption body GRECO, and has taken measures regarding the transparency of party funding and disciplinary actions against

prosecutors, among others, the body said on Thursday. GRECO, with the authorisation of Hungarian authorities, on Thursday published on its website three reports on the country’s compliance with its recommendations to prevent corruption. Two of the reports were prepared in 2017 and one in December 2018. GRECO has made 18 recommendations to combat corruption in Hungary, the body said. Of those, the country has complied with only five in a satisfactory manner, it said.

Regarding the disciplinary procedure against prosecutors, GRECO said that despite the steps taken, Hungary still failed to conduct those procedures through an official hierarchy. The election procedure of the public prosecutor was also in need of reform, GRECO said, adding the same was true when it came to the immunity of prosecutors, which the body said was too far-reaching. The report said party funding had become more transparent as the authorities had taken steps to ensure records are transparent and up-to-date. However, the “overall situation” on party funding remained unchanged, it said.

In the report “Corruption prevention in respect of members of parliament, judges and prosecutors”, GRECO called on the Hungarian authorities to ensure transparent legislative procedures, including interactions with lobbyists. Authorities should also implement a code of conduct for lawmakers, especially in cases of conflict of interest and create a unified form of asset declarations, as well as a system for implementing these regulations, the

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report said. Regarding the situation of judges, the report expressed concern in connection with the powers of the President of the National Judicial Office in the process of appointing candidates for judicial positions and reassigning judges. GRECO “implores” the authorities to address these issues as a matter of priority, “to better protect the independence of the judiciary in Hungary,” the 2018 report said.

CLASSICIST TAPPED TO HEAD FORMER MTA RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

The classical scholar and professor Miklós Maróth has been tapped to head the Eötvös Loránd Research Network (ELKH), a body established to take over the research institutions of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA), László Palkovics, the minister of innovation and technology, said at a press conference. Palkovics said he and László Lovász, the head of the Academy, jointly nominated Maróth for the post. He dismissed speculation that the government had “dictated” the appointment. “There was no pressure whatsoever,” he said. Lawmakers approved amendments to legislation in early July that removed the MTA’s network of research institutions to ELKH, a body with its own, independent budget chapter. The Academy, which had been in talks with the Ministry of Innovation and Technology on changes to the R&D&I system in Hungary for about a year, protested against the changes.

MINISTER: HUNGARY JOINS UN ROAD SAFETY SCHEME

Hungary has joined the United Nations road safety scheme, the minister of innovation and technology announced. Measures under the programme include developing safety technology, providing education and training, as well as making use of police resources, László Palkovics told a press conference at Hungaroring racing circuit near Budapest. Hungary will also offer education in safe road-use to countries that are less developed in this respect, for instance in Africa, he said. The scheme aims to help achieve the UN goal of eliminating deaths linked to road accidents in Europe by 2050, the minister said. He noted that globally around 1.3 million people die in road accidents each year. A large part of them occur in Europe and often involve inexperienced young drivers, the minister added. Traffic accidents leading to deaths have considerably dropped in Hungary in the past 20 years and reached a record low number of 220 in the first half of 2019, he said. Hungary is providing 30,000 dollars to finance its part of the programme, Palkovics said.

KSH: HUNGARY MAY TRADE SURPLUS REVISED DOWN TO EUR 674 M

Hungary’s May trade surplus was revised slightly down to 674 million

euros in a second reading of data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH). In the first reading, published on July 9, KSH had put the May surplus at 678 million euros. Revised figures show imports rose by an annual 2.8% in value terms to 8.760 billion euros. Exports were up by 4.6% at 9.435 billion euros. The trade surplus narrowed by 181 million euros from the same month a year earlier. Trade with other European Union member states accounted for 82% of Hungary’s exports and 75% of the country’s imports. Hungary had a trade surplus of 1.2 billion euros with EU countries and a trade deficit of 499 million euros with the rest of the world. The surplus with the EU rose by 425 million euros and the deficit with countries outside the EU increased by 244 million euros from a year earlier. Hungary’s terms of trade were unchanged in May as both import and export prices rose by 2.5% in forint terms. The forint weakened 2.7% to the euro and 8.6% to the dollar in the period. In January-May, Hungary’s trade surplus reached 2.772 billion euros, down from 3.123 billion euros in the same period a year earlier. January-May imports were up by 6.5% at 43.279 billion euros and exports rose by 5.2% to 46.051 billion euros.

NBH OFFERS FREE FINANCIAL ADVICE TO RESIDENTS OF UNDERDEVELOPED REGION

The National Bank of Hungary (NBH) is offering financial advice, free of charge, to residents of small

communities in the underdeveloped north-east of the country in August and September, the central bank said. The NBH is partnering with the local government of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County to put consultants on mobile government office buses which travel from community to community. The consultants will visit 20-25 settlements in the course of the pilot project.

TARLÓS: NIGHT AIR TRAFFIC TO FULLY STOP OVER BUDAPEST

Noise pollution caused by airplanes flying over Budapest in the night will soon be fully eliminated under amendments allowing restrictions in the current legislation, the mayor of the city said. Under an amendment, air traffic will be overall banned at Budapest's Liszt Ferenc International Airport between midnight and 5am, István Tarlós told a press conference. The legislation also rules for levying a fine of up to 1,000 euros on flights carried out during the time period of the ban, he said, adding that the number of noise level monitoring spots will be increased to 13 from the current 6.

AUG 20 FIREWORKS DISPLAY TO FEATURE 26,000 VISUAL EFFECTS

Hungary's traditional fireworks spectacle will feature a show with more than 26,000 visual effects on the August 20 national holiday celebrating

Hungary's first Christian king, St Stephen, a government official said on Wednesday. State celebrations will start in front of Parliament with the hoisting of the national flag and the traditional oath taking of young military officers. The ceremony will be addressed by Hungary's president and the defence minister, the state secretary for international communications and relations, Zoltán Kovács, told a press conference. Programmes during the day include a military air show over the Danube featuring Gripen fighter jets and a holy mass in St Stephen's Basilica. The fireworks spectacle over the Danube this year has been designed using special software and will feature a surprise element, Kovács said. Leading up to St Stephen's Day are programmes starting on August 17 with the Festival of Folk Arts in the Buda Castle and a three-day gastronomy event offering specialties from the Carpathian Basin opening in the Várkert Bazár on August 18.

F1 HUNGARY GRAND PRIX TO BE SECURED BY 1,200 POLICE

The upcoming Formula One Hungarian Grand Prix at the Hungaroring racing circuit near Budapest will be secured by some 1,200 police officers, a local police spokesman said. The Grand Prix, held on Saturday and Sunday, is expected to be attended by around 100,000 spectators, similarly to previous years, press officer Tamás András said, adding that the Austrian,

Slovak, and Romanian police units will help their Hungarian colleagues. The police will set up a temporary station at Hungaroring operating from Thursday noon to midnight on Sunday, the officer said.

TRADITIONAL HUNGARIAN CURD CHEESE GETS TSG DESIGNATION

"Rögös túró", a traditional curd cheese made in Hungary, has obtained the Traditional Specialties Guaranteed (TSG) label from the European Commission, the Dairy Products Council told MTI. TSG products must have a traditional composition or be made according to traditional production methods. However, the designation does not impose any restrictions on the geographical origin of the product. The Dairy Products Council noted that rögös túró is an essential component of a number of traditional Hungarian dishes such as crepes with curd, cheesecake, cheese dumplings and noodles with curd.

GABLINI TO OPEN ASTON MARTIN SHOWROOM IN BUDAPEST

Hungarian car seller Gablini will open Hungary's first Aston Martin showroom in May in the framework of an importer's agreement signed in Budapest on Thursday. The agreement was signed by Aston Martin's European president Thomas Kiesele and Gablini owner Gábor Gablini. The showroom

for the iconic British brand will serve markets in Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania. Gablini expects to sell at least 15 Aston Martins in the showroom's first calendar year and double that number in the following year. Gablini is spending several hundred million forints on the construction of the showroom next to the M3 motorway. Gablini has been selling new cars in Hungary for more than 30 years. It sells five brands at five bases in and around the capital. Last year, it sold 2,000 cars and generated revenue of 17 billion forints.

AGROSPRINT INAUGURATES HUF 2.2BN EXPANSION

Fruit and vegetable processing company AgroSprint inaugurated a 2.2 billion forint unit at its base in Nyírlugos, in north-eastern Hungary. The ceremony was attended by Finance Minister Mihály Varga. The company financed the capacity expansion from a 750 million forint

European Union grant and its own funds of 1.3 billion. AgroSprint built a new production unit and storage area and invested into new technology to develop the processing phase of its production of deep-frozen sweetcorn, owner Gábor Fülöp said.

Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture Tamás Tarpataki noted that Hungary is Europe's biggest producer of sweetcorn, growing more than 500,000 tonnes of sweetcorn a year on more than 36,000 hectares.

AgroSprint, Europe's biggest exporter and producer of deep-frozen sweetcorn, operates ten bases in Hungary and five in Romania. It had revenue of 11.4 billion forints in 2018.

RETRO RADIO RULES THE AIRWAVES IN HUNGARY

Retro Radio, which plays a mix of classic popular music, was the most-listened-to broadcaster in Hungary in the second quarter, data compiled by the National Media and Infocommunications

Authority (NMHH) show. About 1.7 million Hungarians over the age of 15 listened to Retro Radio on a daily basis during the period, NMHH said. Runner-up during the quarter was Petőfi Radio, a public radio station that plays new popular music, with 1.3 million listeners a day. In third place, with 1.2 million daily listeners, was Kossuth Radio, another public station that broadcasts a mix of news and talk. Popular music station Radio 1 was in fourth place with 1 million listeners a day, and Dankó Radio, which plays popular 19th-century Hungarian songs, Hungarian folk, world music and operetta, was in fifth with 245,000 listeners. Classical music station Bartok Radio was in sixth place with 105,000 daily listeners, and talk radio InfoRadio was in seventh with 60,000 listeners. Alone in the capital, Retro Radio was also the most-listened-to radio station with 207,000 people tuning in a day. Runner-up was Radio 1 with 205,000 listeners, and Kossuth Radio was in third place with 170,000 listeners.