

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zsolt Czeglédy

The weathervane of the reformed church in Debrecen's Árpád square

UPCOMING EVENTS

Áder visits the Solar Decathlon 2019 university architecture competition

Stats office releases data on July guest nights

Parliament's budgetary committee meets

TOP STORY

ORBÁN HOPES FOR STABLE, STRONG AUSTRIAN GOVT

Hungary's prime minister has said he hopes Austria will have a stable and strong government after the election scheduled for the end of September.

Hungary has a vested interest in Austria's continued rejection of "all forms of terrorism and political Islam", and seeks its help in defending Europe from migrants, Viktor Orbán said after meeting Norbert Hofer, the head of the Freedom Party of Austria, in Budapest. He said Hungary had no intention of interfering in the Austrian election. He called Austria a historic and strategic partner of Hungary, saying that Austria's success was in Hungary's interest. Orbán also praised the FPÖ's work as a ruling party, saying that inter-governmental relations were excellent. "It turns out we thought similarly of a great many issues," he said. The current talks confirmed that agreement, he said, wishing the FPÖ a "successful campaign and that it successfully forms a government". He also said Austria should remain "a stable and great partner of Hungary".

Hofer said he trusted his party would prevail in the election and that "fruitful cooperation with Hungary will then continue on inter-governmental level". He said "defence against political Islam" was a priority.

**TRÓCSÁNYI
COMMISSIONER-
DESIGNATE
FOR ENLARGEMENT**

László Trócsányi, a former justice minister, has been selected as the European Union’s commissioner-designate for neighbourhood and enlargement. European Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen presented her team and the new structure of the next EC in Brussels on Tuesday.

Trócsányi said the position would be a great honour both for him for and Hungary. “Enlargement and neighbourhood policy are especially important areas which have an impact on the everyday lives of European citizens,” he said in a statement. “At my hearing in the European Parliament, I will pledge to do everything in my power to fully live up to this important role”, he said, adding he would make use of his experiences in diplomacy and international relations.

The European Parliament must give its consent to the entire College of Commissioners after hearings of the commissioners-designate in parliamentary committees. Once the EP has given its consent, the European Council formally appoints the EC.

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán welcomed Trócsányi’s selection, saying the bloc’s enlargement was a “great and beautiful task ... and Hungarians like such tasks”. As a seasoned politician who “understands the

essence of Europe”, Trócsányi is well suited to help aspiring EU members to “take over European rules, norms and values”, he said. The EU faces a number of challenges, and the integration of the Western Balkans is among the most important for Hungarians, Orbán added.

At a press conference, Von der Leyen said Hungary’s objectives “are clear regarding the integration of the Western Balkans, which are in line with the those of the new European Commission”. The integration of those countries will be a focal point of the new EC’s work, she said. “I think Hungary is the country that will precisely cooperate accordingly,” she said.

Hungary’s Fidesz-KDNP group in the European Parliament welcomed Von der Leyen’s announcement to designate Trócsányi to take up “one of the most important commission posts”. Enlargement policy has been one of the most prominent portfolios of the commission for decades, the group said in a statement. Hungary has been a leading supporter of EU enlargement and Croatia’s accession from the beginning, it said, adding that the integration of the Western Balkans would remain a priority of the Hungarian government. “We believe that enlargement can bring about a true reunification of Europe,” the group said. Trócsányi is an internationally recognised professional and his diplomatic experience makes him entirely suitable for one of the most

important commission posts, the statement said.

Commenting on the selection of Trócsányi, the opposition Democratic Coalition said he was “unfit” to be a member of the European Commission. Csaba Molnár, an MEP of the leftist party, said the former justice minister had facilitated Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s “every anti-democratic and anti-rule-of-law endeavour”. Socialist MEP István Ujhelyi said in a statement that he would, “on principle”, not vote for a European Commission that offered a position to “the legal architect-in-chief of the illiberal state”.

The Neighbourhood and Enlargement portfolio has been led by Johannes Hahn, while Trócsányi’s Hungarian predecessor, Tibor Navracsics, has been Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport.

**GERMAN FOREIGN
MINISTER: GERMAN UNITY
NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT
HUNGARIANS**

It would have been impossible to restore German unity without the help of Hungarians in 1989, Germany’s foreign minister said in Berlin at the opening of a Hungary-Germany youth forum. Heiko Maas, referring to the opening up of the Hungarian border thirty years ago on September 10, 1989, said that Hungarians had cleared the path to freedom for escaping East Germans. By opening the border, “Hungarians punched the first brick out of the Berlin wall”. This brick, he added,



had become the foundation for today's peaceful Europe based on solidarity. The minister said that in the climate of today's problems and disputes, "perhaps we should talk about this more from time to time". He added that as a German and a European, he paid thanks to Hungarians for their steadfastness in 1989.

Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said at the forum that cooperation between Germany and central Europe "fundamentally determines the future of Europe". The events thirty years ago showed that Hungarians and Germans working together is "good for the whole of Europe", he said. Europe became stronger, wealthier and more peaceful with the accession of the eastern European states in 2004, and the region has gone on to be the engine of European growth, Szijjártó said. The volume of trade of Germany with the Visegrad Group exceeds German-French trade by 74%, he said, adding that cooperation between eastern Europe and Germany is key to European competitiveness and therefore determines the bloc's position in the world. He called for European Union enlargement to integrate countries of the Western Balkans.

Meanwhile, at a commemoration held at the plaque marking the 1989 events on the wall of the German lower house of Parliament, the Bundestag, Hungarian House Speaker László Kövér said Hungary's independence and German unity

were interlinked and constituted "a special ingredient of the future of a united, strong and democratic Europe". Kövér noted that a twin of the plaque is placed on the wall of the Hungarian Parliament, reminding lawmakers and visitors "what we Hungarians and Germans did, in a demonstration of our friendship, for unity, independence and democracy."

Bundestag chairman Wolfgang Schäuble said at the event that the 1989 events were an example of Hungarian love of freedom. Hungarians "bravely and generously" gave a "crucial boost" to the events leading to German unity, he said.

"The time has come for Hungarian poets to seek new metaphors to describe the situation of their country, because Hungary is no longer a raft floating between East and West, but has a solid place in the heart of Europe, Schäuble said. Hungary took a huge risk by opening the borders for some 200,000 East German refugees in 1989, Schäuble said, not only in view of the 80,000 Soviet soldiers occupying the country but also because the Soviet Union had clamped down on all previous freedom movements in the region, he said. Hungarians, however, chose to help East Germans, which resulted in a "shared sense of freedom". Germans have always thought of Hungary as a "neighbour without shared borders," and the relationship reached a new level in 1989, he said.

POLICE INVESTIGATE OPPOSITION'S HANDLING OF VOTER DATA

Police are investigating the opposition's handling of voter data in connection with the local election campaign in the 8th district of Budapest, the daily Magyar Nemzet's online edition said, citing police information. The authorities in the 8th district are investigating the handling of voter data by the opposition's campaign branch there as well as allegations of abuse of personal data, according to magyarnemzet.hu. The paper said evidence in the form of documents and photos showed that the opposition was creating an illegal voter database. Data protection authority head Attila Péterfalvi told the paper on Monday: "If press reports are true, not only was there unlawful data management but personal data abuse and election crimes will have taken place too." He said the law prohibits the recording of data and using voter recommendation slips for any other purpose than collecting a sufficient number of signatures for a candidate to be eligible to run in the election.

Máté Kocsis, the leader of the ruling Fidesz group and a former mayor of the 8th district, called on the opposition's candidate András Pikó to withdraw.

Commenting earlier, the campaign chief of the opposition mayoral candidate insisted that Pikó's campaign had been carried out in line with Hungarian and European

data protection regulations. In a statement, Tessza Udvarhelyi denied that the unlawful collection of data had taken place. She said the data for the local election campaign was being handled by the civil society C8 Civilek Józsefvárosért in line with regulations published on the organisation's Facebook page and also on all online and offline contact forms. The data of supporters is recorded only if they give consent to this in writing and strictly for specific purposes, such as to subscribe for newsletters or to carry out volunteer work, she said. Personal data from the recommendation slips is not recorded or stored in any form, she added.

Meanwhile, the election office of Budapest's Józsefváros district has filed a complaint with the national data protection authority over alleged abuse of voter data and illegal acts in connection with the local elections, the office said.

The complaint has been filed after a report in Monday's edition of daily Magyar Nemzet showing photographs that allegedly prove that representatives of the opposition alliance had prepared unlawful lists based on the opposition candidates' voter recommendation slips. According to the paper "it is suspected that the opposition records the personal data voters provided on recommendation sheets which is unlawful, as it is also unlawful to copy these sheets". The district's election committee has asked the data protection authority to conduct an investigation.

OFFICIAL: OECD ACKNOWLEDGES AIMS, ACHIEVEMENTS OF GOVT EDUCATION POLICY

The OECD has acknowledged the aims and accomplishments of Hungarian education policymaking, a government official said, commenting on the organisation's Education at a Glance report. Ministry of Innovation and Technology parliamentary secretary Tamás Schanda told a news conference that the publication said Hungarian higher education was on the path to being more international, with the proportion of foreign students rising from 5 to 10% of the total between 2010 and 2017, one of the biggest increases among the countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Foreigners enrolled in masters courses account for 27% of the total. In addition, the proportion of people with tertiary education increased markedly between 2008 and 2018, the number of women rising to 37% from 28% while the proportion of men rose to 25% from 20% in the 25-34 age group. More and more young people have enrolled in higher education, with 89,500 first-year students this year, 4,500 more than the previous year and the highest number since 2014. The government wants to help young Hungarians study at better and more competitive universities and gain valuable degrees so they can find

their place on the labour market, he said.

Schanda said the OECD report also noted with approval the government's plans for vocational training. The proportion of people in vocational training is less than 25%, compared with the OECD average of 40%, though this year's admissions data shows that vocational training is becoming increasingly popular, he said. The government's vocational training strategy developed jointly with market players provides up-to-date training and an attractive learning environment that will create career paths and livelihoods for participants, he said, adding that this in turn would help to further strengthen Hungary's economy.

Meanwhile, the state secretary for public education, Zoltán Maruzsa, noted the report mentioned a major transformation in kindergarten education which has been almost completed. The government, he noted, in 2015 made kindergarten education compulsory from the age of 3. He said that in Hungary there are 12 children per kindergarten teacher, while the EU average is 15 and the OECD average is 16. In primary and secondary education, the Hungarian teacher-student ratio is more favourable than the OECD average, he added, where the latter is 15 students per teacher, while in Hungary it is 11. Maruzsa said the burden on teachers in Hungary is also lower than the OECD average, with 648 hours per teacher, compared



with the OECD average of 783 hours. This is largely due to Hungary's longer summer break, he said.

The latest OECD survey contains data for the 2016-17 academic year.

KARÁCSONY: GREEN BUDAPEST AT STAKE IN ELECTIONS

At stake in the October 13 local elections is whether Budapest becomes a green city or political interests override that goal, left-liberal mayoral candidate Gergely Karácsony said, after endorsing a plan by environmental civil organisations entitled For a Green Budapest. Karácsony, the joint candidate of the Socialists, the Democratic Coalition, the Párbeszéd and the Liberal parties, said he was "proud" to be the first candidate to sign the document prepared by 23 civil organisations.

András Lukács of the green group Levegő Munkacsoport said the authors of the set of recommendations had "had enough" of politicians failing to keep promises made in election campaigns. He said the NGOs had prepared a "legally binding" document to be signed by mayoral candidates and candidates for district mayors and representatives. Should the signatories fail to make good on the pledges contained in the 25-point document, they could be held legally responsible, fined or forced to resign, Lukács said.

ECONOMY MINISTRY 'CLOSELY MONITORING' FATE OF ELECTROLUX EMPLOYEES

The Finance Ministry has said that it is closely monitoring the fate of employees of the Electrolux plant in Jászberény as well as examining the immediate relocation of workers affected by the company's announcement that it is laying off around 800 people at its Jászberény plant. The company has said it is outsourcing the production of vacuum cleaners and most of the production of free-standing refrigerators from Jászberény to external partners with the aim of boosting competitiveness. At the same time, Electrolux Group also announced on Tuesday plans to invest 100 million euros in its high-end refrigerator plant in Nyíregyháza between 2020 and 2023.

FISCAL COUNCIL PROJECTS HIGHER-THAN-ASSUMED GDP GROWTH IN 2019

Hungary's Fiscal Council, which gives opinions on budget matters, has said economic growth may exceed 4.1% assumed in the 2019 budget, supporting the fulfilment of budget targets. Hungary's economy grew by an annual 5.1% in the first half of the year.

The budget ran a 10 billion forint surplus in the first quarter and a 120 billion surplus in the second

quarter, according to accrual-based accounting, the council noted, citing Central Statistical Office (KSH) and National Bank of Hungary (NBH) data. According to cash flow-based accounting, the budget ran a 390 billion forint deficit at the end of the first half, hitting 39.1% of the full-year target, the council said. Pre-financing for European Union funded projects produced a 364 billion forint gap between payouts and transfers from Brussels, it added. The council said the accrual-based deficit is likely to be back-loaded, as in the previous three years, with most of the difference accumulating in the last quarter of the year, adding that the 1.8% deficit target, relative to GDP, is achievable nevertheless.

HUNGARY CPI FALLS TO 3.1% IN AUGUST

Hungary's annual consumer price index stood at 3.1% in August, down from 3.3% in the previous month, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. Headline inflation was lifted by an 8.8% increase in the price of spirits and tobacco and a 5.6% rise in food prices. CPI harmonised for better comparison with other European Union member states was 3.2% in August. Seasonally-adjusted core inflation, which excludes volatile fuel and food prices, was up 3.7%. Inflation calculated using a basket of goods and services used by pensioners stood at 3.4%. In a month-on-month comparison, consumer prices fell by 0.1% in August.

In a monthly analysis released after the publication of the KSH data, the National Bank of Hungary (NBH) attributed the drop in headline inflation mainly to a drop in the price index for unprocessed food. The central bank's measure of core inflation excluding indirect tax effects - a bellwether indicator of underlying inflation - was 3.2% in August, level with the previous month.

After a monthly rate-setting meeting in August, NBH policy makers said core inflation excluding indirect tax effects "is likely to decline gradually to 3% from the end of 2019" because of a "strengthening of disinflationary effects".

The NBH's monthly analysis shows the central bank's indicator for demand-sensitive inflation, which excludes processed foods from core inflation, stood at 2.9%, also unchanged from the previous month. The indicator for sticky price inflation, which includes items for which retail prices vary, on average, no more than 15% a month, was steady, too, at 3.4%. The NBH said households' inflation expectations "remained moderate, at a level consistent with the 3% inflation target" in August.

INCOME TAX CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHARITIES, CHURCHES FALL TO 1.8 M IN 2018

Taxpayers in Hungary opted to give one percent of their personal income tax to churches or charities 1.8 million times last year, down from 2.2 million in 2015, business daily Világgazdaság said, citing data from the National Tax Authority (NAV). Taxpayers in Hungary may opt to donate one percent of their income tax to a single charity and another one percent to a church or state-funded organisation, such as the National Talent Programme.

CHINA-HUNGARY SCIENTIFIC PROJECTS PRESENTED IN BEIJING

Scientific projects were presented in Beijing as part of a series of events held to mark the 70th anniversary of Hungarian-Chinese diplomatic ties. Hungarian Research Day, hosted by the Hungarian Embassy in Beijing, was held for the first time. In a speech, Hungary's ambassador,

Máté Pesti, said the intention was to set up a tradition with the event. As well as referring to the anniversary of diplomatic relations, the ambassador also noted that the two countries have a long history in scientific cooperation, recalling longstanding cooperation between geology researchers since the 1950s.

WIZZ AIR TO LAUNCH BUDAPEST FLIGHTS TO BRUSSELS, KHARKIV, LVIV

Hungarian low-cost airline Wizz Air will launch direct flights from Budapest to Brussels International Airport and to the Ukrainian cities of Kharkiv and Lviv as of June 1 next year, the managing director of Wizz Air Hungary said.

Stephen Jones said Wizz Air will fly Airbus A321neo aircraft daily to Brussels International and twice a week to the two Ukrainian cities. He noted that Wizz Air will continue to operate its flight between Budapest and Brussels South Charleroi Airport. Wizz Air expects to carry 5.6 million passengers on flights to and from Hungarian airports this year, up from 5.2 million in 2018.