

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



Competitor in the BBU underground half marathon in Budapest's 10th district

MTI/Zoltán Balogh

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Coronavirus updates**

**Plenary session of parliament**

## TOP STORY

### ORBÁN: 'HUNGARY BEFORE ALL ELSE'

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in his state-of-the-nation address detailed his government's climate protection action plan and its goals to continue developing the country, concluding it with the motto "Hungary before all else".

Addressing a crowd at Budapest's Várkert Bazár, Orbán said that preserving and modernising jobs would remain an important goal for Hungary in 2020 and beyond. "If we have jobs, we have everything," he said. Orbán said that in terms of growth "Europe's economy, and in particular the euro zone region, has simply stalled", noting that 85% of Hungary's exports went to those countries. "This means that their problem is our problem," he said. In 2019, Germany's industrial output shrank considerably, whereas Hungary's increased by 5%, said Orbán.

Hungary must focus its efforts in 2020 and in the years to come on retaining jobs, he said. In order to achieve that goal, taxes must be reduced, Orbán said, pledging to cut payroll taxes and taxes on small businesses. "Further, we will preserve the value of pensions, in line with the agreement we concluded with pensioners," he said. The prime minister said that in 2020 and 2021 the government's focus would be on continuing to develop the country. "Our job is to prepare the nation for the trials that await us in the coming years," Orbán said.

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## ORBÁN LAYS OUT GOVT'S CLIMATE PROTECTION ACTION PLAN

Hungary's government this past week adopted a climate protection action plan which aims to make 90% of the electricity generated in Hungary carbon-free by 2030, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in his state-of-the-nation address. Orbán said serious steps needed to be taken to maintain achievements because "a climate crisis is looming, the population is declining and dark shadows are hanging over Europe's economy". He said it was clear from his government's plan that it was prepared to be accountable for it in 2030. Detailing the plan, the prime minister said that as of July 1, the government will start eliminating illegal waste sites and penalising polluters. Single-use plastics will be banned and a deposit return scheme will be introduced for glass and plastic bottles and cans, he said. The action plan will also protect rivers from waste flowing in from abroad, Orbán added. The government will also introduce stricter regulations for multinational companies, mandating the use of environment-friendly technologies. Further, the government will allocate 32 billion forints (EUR 95.3m) towards supporting renewable energy production by small and medium-sized companies over the next two years. Under the plan, ten new trees

will be planted for every newborn in Hungary and by 2030 the proportion of the country's forest area will be increased to 27%. Over the next ten years the capacity of solar power plants will be increased six-fold. The government will support the production and purchase of cheap electric vehicles and by 2022 new buses in public transport will all be electric, Orbán said. A so-called green government bond will be introduced with the government vowing to spend all returns on them on climate-friendly schemes, the prime minister said.

Orbán said climate protection had become "politically fashionable", but "all the empty talk cheapens the seriousness of the issue". The prime minister said it was "time to act instead of just talking".

## ORBÁN: HUNGARIANS MUST AGAIN FORGE COMMON GROUND WITH 'NATL CONSULTATION' SURVEY

Hungarians must again forge common ground when they fill out the next "national consultation" survey and provide a basis for the government's policies, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in his state-of-the-nation address. Orbán said a situation has emerged in Europe where "the rights of violent criminals have become more important to decision makers than those of law-abiding citizens." "They mock justice, the life

instincts of honest people and are ready to defend perpetrators instead of victims," he said. "This dangerous phenomenon has now reached Hungary and we are in for serious debates and international battles."

The prime minister said foreign-funded organisations that were part of the "network" of US financier George Soros, along with their hired lawyers, were "filing a myriad of lawsuits, abusing the protection of rights so they can pay out significant sums of money to violent criminals and, of course, themselves". He said the 12,000 lawsuits filed so far had cost Hungary billions. "We can't continue to watch this idly."

On the subject of school segregation of Roma children in Gyöngyöspata, Orbán said the issue had arisen just as Roma families "started down a path of changing their way of life". But, he said "this promising process was struck by lightning" when a court ruling turned the people of Gyöngyöspata against one another. Orbán said the organisation that had initiated the lawsuit in question was also funded by Soros. "We continue to believe in a Hungary that is a safe home to all Hungarians and gives everyone a chance to live a good life," he said. "We will not tolerate stigmatisation or discrimination against anyone over their ethnicity, but neither can it come with any advantage or privilege and everyone should earn their money irrespective of their background."

## ORBÁN: HUNGARY 'STILL HERE' 100 YEARS AFTER TRIANON PEACE TREATY

Marking the coming centenary of the signing of the WWI Trianon Peace Treaty under which two-thirds of Hungary's territory was ceded to neighbouring countries, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in his state-of-the-nation address that one hundred years after the "death sentence" that was the Trianon treaty, "we're alive and Hungary is still here." "Not only are we alive but we have also freed ourselves from the clutches of a hostile ring of alliances," the prime minister told a crowd at Budapest's Várkert Bazár. Orbán said Hungary was now finding common ground with neighbouring Slovakia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, and was in a position to engage in broad cooperation and form alliances with them. "History has again given central European peoples a chance to build a new alliance based on their own national interests, allowing us to defend ourselves against threats from both the east and the west," Orbán said.

The prime minister also said that the key to the nation's prosperity was the restoration of its self-esteem. He said that the citizens of every troubled country could only regain their personal self-esteem with the return of their own nation's self-esteem. Orbán said that in 2010 the objective of his incoming

government had been "to prove to ourselves and to the world that we are still somebody".

"We figured that we would either find a path or create one for ourselves," he said, adding that the only option left for his government had been the latter since "the path set by Brussels and Washington was unacceptable for us." Orbán said that looking back after ten years he could say "with due modesty" that "we figured out what to do and we did it". He said his government had "sent the IMF home", managed to pay back the loans early, created 850,000 jobs, put the country's finances in order and launched schemes to help "a reunification of the nation", and reconnected Hungarian communities beyond the borders with Hungary. He said that in economic reports released in Brussels this week "the whole of Europe may read that in 2019 the Hungarian economy registered the highest growth rate on the whole continent".

Turning to the period between 2002 and 2010, Orbán said "Hungary was bankrupted by a government made up of former communists and its liberal policies." "This example supports the assumption that there is no such thing as a liberal. A liberal is nothing else but a communist with a degree," he said, adding that "if we had heeded their advice, Hungary right now would be lying in a hospital ward with the tubes of IMF and Brussels

loans sticking out of all of its limbs and [US financier] George Soros would be holding the loan faucet." "None of this is an exaggeration," the prime minister said. "I, who have spent more than 30 years in politics, have seen Soros attempt to rob Hungary on three occasions with my own eyes."

## ORBÁN: HUNGARY'S LAST TEN YEARS MOST SUCCESSFUL DECADE OF PAST CENTURY

"The facts show that the last ten years were the most successful ten years in Hungary's last 100 years," Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in his state-of-the-nation address. Detailing Hungary's achievements over the past ten years, Orbán said that in no other decade over the past century had the country been both externally and internally balanced while maintaining sustainable growth. Hungary achieved all this while keeping wealth inequality at a moderate level according to European standards, he said, adding that this meant that Hungary's broader society had benefited from the country's growth.

Vulnerable social groups like young people, people aged older than 50, mothers and low-skilled workers have all been able to find jobs over the past 10 years, he said. Wages are on the rise and the minimum wage for both skilled

and unskilled workers has been doubled, said Orbán. Investments in Hungary and exports both hit record highs last year, he said, noting that Hungary ranks 94th in the world in population size and 34th in terms of the size of its export volume. These have been the achievements of a country of ten million people, Orbán said, adding all this was proof of "skills and diligence".

The prime minister said those who were critical of Hungarian teachers, the education system and vocational training should hold back on their criticism, arguing that workers, experts and engineers "who run the world's most modern factories here in Hungary all graduated from our schools and universities".

"Over the past ten years we also learned that Europe is not in Brussels," Orbán said. "Europe is us and we don't have to please the tired Brussels elites ... In the past we used to think that Europe was our future but today we know that we are the future of Europe." He said the Carpathian Basin today was a source of strength that stemmed from the recognition that "being Hungarian is promising and uplifting". "Our nation knows that Hungary comes first," he said.

## **ORBÁN: GOVT'S FAMILY SUBSIDIES WORKING**

Speaking about the government's family protection action plan in his state-of-the-nation address, Prime

Minister Viktor Orbán said that more than 100,000 families have so far availed of the state-subsidised prenatal baby support loan. The scheme exempting mothers with at least four children from the personal income tax "makes the lives of 40,000 families easier," he said. Orbán said that although it had not been included in its family protection plan, the government had also addressed the issue of infertility and had managed "to take not just one, but two steps forward in fertility treatment".

"The most important aim was to make fertility examinations and treatments, as well as medication accessible for all those in need free of charge," Orbán said. Further, he called it "good news" that 90,000 more children had been born between 2010 and 2018 than would have been born, "had tendencies remained the same as they had been around 2010".

"I know that sooner or later mothers with three children will also have to be exempted from paying personal income tax, similarly to how a scheme currently allows it for mothers raising four children," Orbán said. "I am also aware that during the first six months after giving birth, a mother receives 70% of her annual average wage of the preceding year," he said, adding that "this should be raised to 100%". The prime minister noted the reimbursement of written driver's licence test and language proficiency exam fees, saying that the measure

should also be made available to mothers receiving maternity allowance.

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## **OPPOSITION PARTIES REACT TO PM'S ADDRESS**

Opposition parties gave their reactions to the prime minister's state-of-the-nation address in which Viktor Orbán laid out in detail his government's climate protection action plan and its goals to continue developing the country, on Sunday.

Nationalist Jobbik said that the prime minister "has left Hungarians workers and pensioners on their own". "In the green policy unveiled, the country's first man seems to be interested in the so-called green government bond," the leader of the party said in a statement. Hungarians are however more interested to know how the government plans to protect their families from the effects of an economic crisis, but heard nothing from the prime minister about that, Péter Jakab said. He said Jobbik proposed that the government should have spent the hundreds of billions of forints it spent on "the hate campaign wrapped up in its national consultation survey" on increasing wages and pensions.

Bertalan Tóth, the leader of the Socialists, called Orbán "a one-man fake news factory". Viktor Orbán gave an outline of "a parallel world he has envisioned and created, a world that is about his own achievements," Tóth said in a video message. But,

he added, the prime minister had failed "to say a word about the life of the average Hungarian".

Ferenc Gyurcsány, leader of the Democratic Coalition, said "democratic Hungary has never been as divided as it is now". He said the country is "now dictated by party state and party logic rather than nation or national governance". "In the past ten years Hungary became a loser and lost its friends in the community of European nations," Gyurcsány said in a statement, adding that Orbán had evaluated the past year, but the final evaluation about him would be given by the Hungarian people.

The Párbeszéd party said in a statement that the prime minister had no answer to Hungary's health-care, education or housing problems. In a statement, the party said that instead of giving solutions, Orbán had diverted attention from what was important with a national consultation survey "again costing billions".

Green LMP said the climate protection measures announced by the prime minister should have been taken a long time ago and were not in line with current challenges. LMP can only believe the government if it makes immediate substantive changes in the areas of environment and nature protection, party co-leader Erzsébet Schmuck said in a statement. She called for a ministry of climate and sustainability to be set up and for funds in the central budget to be allocated towards those two areas.

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## HUNGARIANS EVACUATED FROM WUHAN RELEASED FROM CORONAVIRUS QUARANTINE

Hungarians evacuated from Wuhan, the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak, earlier this month were discharged from a Budapest hospital quarantine on Sunday, the head of the National Institute of Hematology and Infectology at South Pest Central Hospital told MTI. The six men and one woman were symptom-free for the entire duration of their quarantine and all of their tests came back negative for the coronavirus, János Szlávík said. He noted that the reason for their 14-day quarantine was that this is the longest-known incubation period for the virus.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said earlier that Japan has decided to extend by two weeks the quarantine of the crew of a cruise ship stranded off the country's coast because of a coronavirus outbreak. The Hungarian citizens aboard the Diamond Princess are still symptom-free but because they are members of the crew, they, too will have to stay on the ship for another two weeks after the last passenger leaves the vessel next week, Szijjártó said on Facebook. The foreign ministry will remain in contact with them and provide them any assistance they may need, he added.

The last passenger of the Diamond Princess will be let off the ship next week. Health officials began evacuating elderly people from the ship on Thursday so that

they could be transported to hospital. The Diamond Princess had 2,666 passengers and 1,045 crew members on board from 56 countries.

More than 64,000 people have been infected with the COVID-19 virus worldwide so far.

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## ÁDER: CREDIBILITY OF EU DEPENDS ON SPEEDING UP ENLARGEMENT

Speeding up enlargement is crucial for the credibility of the European Union, President János Áder said after talks with his Italian counterpart Sergio Matterella in Rome on Friday. The EU's next seven-year budget and migration were also discussed, he told Hungary's public media. The EU's enlargement with the Western Balkan states had been on the agenda for a long time, Áder said, emphasising the need to speed up accession talks with Serbia and Montenegro. The two presidents were in agreement that such talks should be started with North Macedonia and Albania this year.

"After so many delays, the credibility of the European Union depends on its ability to speed up the enlargement process," he said, expressing hope that Hungarian EU Commissioner for Enlargement Oliver Várhelyi would be able to play a key role in the process. The two presidents agreed that the current system of farm subsidies should be maintained and further cohesion resources provided during the next seven-year financial framework.

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Commenting on the 2050 climate targets and their financing, Áder said Matterella had agreed with him that it would be unacceptable to offer support to those countries that had failed to fulfil the targets and withdraw support from those that had met them. If extra resources are needed and member countries must increase their contributions to guarantee the success of the EU's climate policy, then Italy will be ready to do so and Hungary must do the same, he said. Some countries have to be convinced to act this way but Áder expressed hope that a compromise solution would be found and extra resources allocated.

Áder and Matterella agreed that migration should be kept under control and illegal migration halted. "Fighting against illegal migration, human smuggling and human trading are equally important common tasks, similarly to the protection of European borders," Áder said. Help must be

primarily provided on the spot, for the countries of origin, and in addition to the EU resources, other rich countries should also contribute to the efforts, he said.

## **GOVT PLEDGES TO HELP ALMOST 1,000 LAID OFF ABB WORKERS**

Minister of Innovation and Technology László Palkovics promised the government's support for almost 1,000 people who are being laid off at ABB's circuit breaker plant in Ózd, in the underdeveloped northeast of the country, after meeting with local officials and company managers on Friday. ABB on Tuesday announced plans to shut down the plant at the end of 2020 because of falling demand. Palkovics said the best option would be for the plant to remain intact with its workforce, adding that the government was

prepared to offer its support if investors show interest. The ministry is also ready to support other employers in the region who hire the laid off workers, he said.

## **S&P, FITCH AFFIRM HUNGARY 'BBB' RATINGS; S&P REVISES OUTLOOK TO 'POSITIVE'**

S&P Global Ratings and Fitch Ratings both affirmed Hungary's 'BBB' sovereign ratings at scheduled reviews on Friday, but S+P revised the outlook on its rating for the country to 'positive' from 'stable'. "We could raise our ratings on Hungary within the next 24 months if the country's economic performance continues to be stronger and more balanced than peers', further lifting the country's income levels. We could also raise the ratings if budget deficits narrow substantially during the forecast period," S&P said.