

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at the Bled Strategic Forum

MTVI/PM's press office/Benke Vivien/Cher

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU defence, foreign ministers meet in Slovenia

Stats office releases July industry prices

Coronavirus updates

Budapest Book Week opens

TOP STORY

PM: MIGRATION MEMBER STATE COMPETENCY

The only solution for handling the issue of migration in the European Union is to give all the rights relating to it back to member states, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told a panel discussion during the international 16th Bled Strategic Forum.

Hungary does not accept migration as a solution to demographic challenges because migrants, who are mostly Muslims, would change the cultural identity of Europe, Orbán said. During the 2015 migration crisis he was the first to point out that the EU's approach to migration could destroy European culture. The prime minister noted that already back then his position had been that uncontrolled migration could result in terrorism and social difficulties that the EU was not prepared for. "Migration must be stopped," Orbán said. He added that the EU could be facing another migration crisis as a result of the recent developments in Afghanistan. "The only way to prevent the dispute on migration from destroying the unity of the EU is to give all the rights back to the nation states in relation to migration," he added. "If we invite others from outside Europe, that will change the cultural identity of Europe," he said. "We only believe that the ... traditional Christian family policy can help us out."

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ORBÁN CALLS FOR SPEEDY INTEGRATION OF SERBIA

Serbia's European Union integration is key when it comes to the geopolitical interests and security of Europe, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told the 16th Bled Strategic Forum. He added that the EU needed Serbia more than Serbia needed the EU. Commenting on the future of Europe, Orbán said the EU must stay together and must maintain its unity. Economic success is a basic condition for the EU's unity, he added, insisting that "without economic success there is no basis for common values". The panel discussion included several heads of government and state from the region, including Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša, Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, and Slovak Prime Minister Eduard Heger, as well as Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić, Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković and Greek Premier Kyriakos Mitsotakis. Also joining the discussion were President of the European Council Charles Michel, President of the European Parliament David Sassoli, Vice-President of the European Commission for Democracy and Demography Dubravka Šuica, and Cardinal Secretary of State from the Vatican Pietro Parolin.

ORBÁN HOLDS TALKS WITH CROATIAN PM

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has met Andrej Plenković, his Croatian counterpart, to discuss

the European political situation, the European Union's future and Hungarian-Croatian cooperation, the prime minister's press chief said on Wednesday. Meeting on the sidelines of the 16th Bled Strategic Forum, Orbán and Plenković discussed current issues of regional cooperation and the importance of border control, Bertalan Havasi said. Central Europe will have to represent its interests in talks on the future of Europe vigorously, Orbán said. Plenković thanked Hungary for the aid provided to earthquake-hit central Croatia earlier this year, he said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ WARNS OF 'VICIOUS CIRCLE' OF PANDEMIC, MIGRATION

The coronavirus pandemic and migration form a "vicious circle", Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said at a United Nations conference in Geneva on Wednesday, arguing that the more the virus spreads, the more people will flee their home countries, spreading the virus even further. Apart from its effects on public health, the pandemic also has a serious impact on global trade and the economy, Szijjártó told the fifth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries. The biggest impact is felt by the least developed countries, since they are the most vulnerable, he added. The pandemic has also intensified the factors that drive mass migration, Szijjártó, who is

the co-chair of the conference, said. This, he said, could lead to a "vicious circle" of migrants spreading the virus further, which then could force more people to flee their homes.

The minister emphasised the importance of providing help at the point where it is needed instead of causing problems where there are none, arguing that it was "complicated to imagine" that any illegal migrants could present two negative PCR tests. Unless the developed countries offer more effective aid programmes for the countries in need, more and more mass migration waves will emerge, most of which will affect Europe, Szijjártó said, adding that the risk of this was growing due to the situation in Afghanistan. As regards Hungary's support for countries in need, Szijjártó said the government spent more than 400 million dollars on its international development schemes last year. This means that the country has surpassed its target of spending 0.25% of its GDP on development aid by 2025, he said. Szijjártó also noted that Hungary has delivered some 1.6 million doses of Covid vaccines to the least developed countries.

PINTÉR: EU MINISTERS' STATEMENT ON AFGHANISTAN REFLECTS HUNGARY'S POSITION

The EU interior ministers' statement on the situation in Afghanistan adopted at their Tuesday meeting clearly reflects the position Hungary's

government has maintained since the migration crisis in 2015, the Hungarian interior minister said in Brussels. In the statement, the interior ministers insisted that the Afghan people must be helped to stay in the region and supported there after the Taliban have come to power in their country, Sándor Pintér told reporters. They also emphasised the need to protect the borders of the European Union, he added. Hungary's proposal for drawing up a concrete plan of action as soon as possible was also backed by the interior ministers, he said.

Hungary will not stay away from supporting Afghan people in the region who are in danger, with particular attention to the situation of women and children, Pintér said. "Nevertheless, it is highly important that only those people should be allowed to cross the borders of Europe whom we, in the continent, accept to take in," he said. "Hungary at the moment does not take refugees over from other countries because it must first be examined who had helped the Hungarian army contingent's mission in Afghanistan. Decisions on letting them enter Hungary will be made accordingly," Pintér said. "Just because someone is an Afghan citizen, we do not necessarily support their admission to Hungary," he said. Referring to the danger of terrorism, Pintér said, "it is hard to know who are arriving and who have been sent by the Taliban. This is something to be thoroughly investigated, as Europol, the EU's law enforcement agency, suggested previously."

JUSTICE MINISTER CALLS HUNGARY "MODEL STATE"

Justice Minister Judit Varga has called Hungary a "model state" in terms of managing issues around migration. Her entry on Facebook appeared on Wednesday after Mattias Tesfaye, Denmark's minister for immigration and integration, called it a mistake that Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán had been criticised for having erected a fence along Hungary's southern border in 2015. Varga cited Tesfaye as saying that Denmark advocated strong border defence and that Europe should not make a choice between granting humanitarian assistance and building walls to protect the continent but it should do both.

BUDAPEST WON'T HOST WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS IF STUDENT QUARTER PLANS AXED, CITY ASSEMBLY RULES

The Budapest metropolitan assembly on Wednesday approved a proposal declaring that the city will not host the 2023 World Athletics Championships if the government approves the construction of a campus for China's Fudan University in place of a students' quarter in the capital's 9th district. The proposal, adopted with 18

votes in favour and 13 against, also requires the government to ensure the continuation of the Healthy Budapest scheme. Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony, who submitted the motion, said that the municipal council had approved the city staging the World Athletics Championships in an earlier agreement with the government. That deal also covered developments like the continuation of the Healthy Budapest Programme and the construction of the students' quarter in the 9th district, he said. Karácsony insisted, however, that the government had violated that agreement by passing the law on the establishment of a foundation to run Fudan University's local campus. The mayor said all the municipal council could do in this case was "make it as clear as possible" that Budapest would honour the agreement with the government, adding that scrapping the plans to build the students' quarter would "trigger an irreversible process".

Referring to his talks with the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF), Karácsony said it was clear that "world championships are not held in a city which does not support the event". The assembly authorised the mayor to inform the IAAF about the decision should the government transfer the site on which the student complex should be built to the Fudan project. The assembly also called on the government not to go on with the Fudan project before a

referendum was held on the contested scheme. Deputies of the ruling parties said that the city's withdrawing its support from the championships had "no legal relevance". Concerning the health programme, they said that the necessary financing was in place, but "there are delays in payments".

The assembly also decided to make public transport free for users under 14 in a unanimous vote from September 2. According to the proposal, public transport user numbers have dropped by 30-40% since 2019 due to the coronavirus pandemic, and revenues dropped by 30 billion forints (EUR 86.2m).

DK CALLS ON GOVT TO PAY OFF HOSPITALS' DEBT

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) has called on the government to consolidate the debt portfolio of hospitals with immediate effect. Zoltán Komáromi, the party's health expert, told an online press conference on Wednesday that hospitals were accumulating debt at an "unprecedented" scale, and argued that between January and August they had amassed as much as last year's total. "Consolidation to the tune of at least 50 billion forints (EUR 144m) is needed," he insisted. Komáromi also said that the local management of hospitals had "no chance" to reduce their cost because all purchases were centralised. "The state should finance health services based on actual cost," he insisted.

HUNGARY RECORDS ONE CORONAVIRUS DEATH, 194 NEW INFECTIONS

One Covid patient died over the past 24 hours, while 194 new coronavirus infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Wednesday. So far 5,772,010 people have received a first jab, while 5,509,130 have been fully vaccinated. Fully 322,000 Hungarians have already received booster jabs. The number of active infections stands at 4,826, while hospitals are treating 132 Covid patients, 13 of whom need respiratory assistance. There are 1,437 people in official quarantine, while 6,584,218 tests have been officially carried out. Since the first outbreak, 812,531 infections have been registered, while fatalities have risen to 30,059. Fully 777,646 people have made a recovery. So far, most infections have been registered in Budapest and Pest County, followed by the counties of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Győr-Moson-Sopron and Hajdú-Bihar.

HUNGARY GDP REBOUNDS FROM LOW PANDEMIC BASE

Hungary's second-quarter GDP grew by 17.9% year-on-year, after a double-digit decline in the base period, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) confirmed in a second reading of data released on Wednesday. Adjusted for seasonal and calendar

year effects, GDP climbed 17.7%. In a quarter-on-quarter comparison, GDP rose a seasonally and calendar year-adjusted 2.7%. KSH noted that unadjusted GDP was 2.2% higher than in Q2 2019, before the start of the pandemic. On the production side, industry contributed 7.3 percentage points to the Q2 headline increase, services 7.0 percentage points and the construction sector 0.9 percentage point. Within services, commerce, vehicle repair and the commercial accommodations and catering sectors accounted for 2.2 percentage points of the increase. Output of industry jumped 36.9% during the period, while output of services climbed 12.4% and construction output increased by 18.4%. Within services, output of the commercial accommodations and catering segment rose by 71.5%. On the expenditure side, final consumption contributed 6.0 percentage points and gross capital formation 5.4 percentage points to the headline increase. The trade balance lifted GDP by 6.5 percentage points. Final consumption increased by 8.1%, while gross capital formation rose by 8.3% during the period. KSH noted that in a quarter-on-quarter comparison, gross added value rose by 2.8% in the industrial sector, 3.6% in construction and 1.8% for services. On the expenditure side, household consumption increased by 1.7%, while public consumption fell 2.3%. Gross fixed capital formation grew 3.2%. ING Bank chief analyst Péter Virovác said the data show the

structure of production-side growth was “relatively balanced”, while services and household consumption drove growth on the expenditure side. He augured quarter-on-quarter growth of 1.0-1.5% in Q3, supported by a pick-up in expenditures on services during the summer months, and put full-year growth over 7.0% and possibly as high as 8% if the fourth wave does not impact the economy.

TRADE VOLUME CONTINUES DOUBLE-DIGIT EXPANSION IN JUNE, KSH CONFIRMS

Hungary’s trade volume continued to grow in the double digits in June, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) confirmed in a second reading of data released on Wednesday. Exports increased by 22% to 10.5 billion euros and imports rose by 25% to 9.9 billion euros from the same period a year earlier. The trade surplus reached 629 million euros. For the period January-June, exports climbed 21.7% year on

year to 59.591 billion euros and imports rose by 19.3% to 55.920 billion euros. The trade surplus reached 3.670 billion euros, widening from 2.095 billion euros in the same period a year earlier.

NYUGATI RAILWAY STATION PASSENGER TERMINAL OPENS AFTER REVAMP

The passenger terminal of Nyugati railway station, originally built by the Eiffel Company in the late 19th century, has been reopened after a revamp project, state railway company MÁV said on Wednesday. The terminal which caters to some 18 million passengers annually has been equipped with a modern digital travel information system and a new, sensor-operated drinking fountain has been built to pay tribute to the 175 year-old Hungarian railways, the statement said. An ongoing renovation project involving the railway station’s roof structure is planned to be completed by next

summer, it added. As part of disability access developments, smart tactile paving will be built leading to the platforms next year which will be expanded later in areas around the station, including the underground passage-ways and side terminals, the statement said.

WIZZ AIR MAKES VACCINE MANDATORY FOR CABIN CREW

All employees working in airplane cabins with Hungarian discount airline Wizz Air are expected to be vaccinated against the coronavirus by December 1, the airline said on Wednesday. In specific instances, the vaccine can be replaced with regular antibody and PCR tests, the statement said. The measure is designed to ensure the health and safety of passengers and staff, as well as uninterrupted service, it said. Wizz Air concluded the 2020-2021 financial year with 576 million euros in the red, against a 281 million euro profit in 2019.