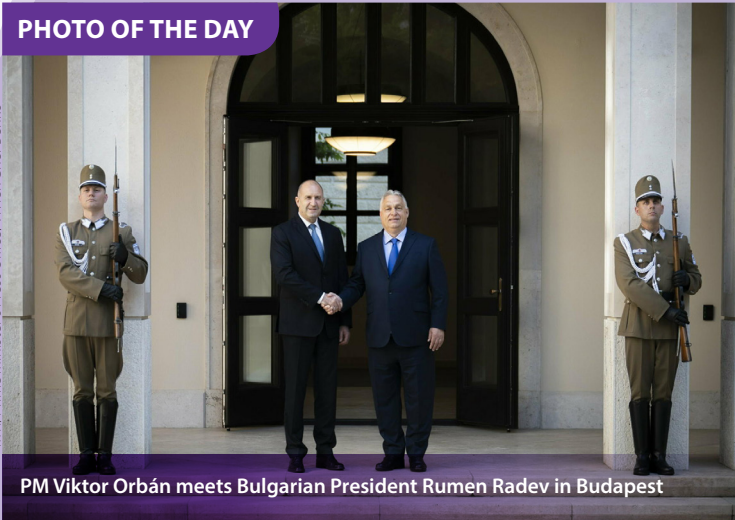


PHOTO OF THE DAY

MTI/Prime Minister's Press Office/Vivien Cher Benko



PM Viktor Orbán meets Bulgarian President Rumen Radev in Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU foreign ministers meet in Brussels

Election campaign events

Events related to the wars in the Middle East, Ukraine

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: JUNE 9 ELECTION ABOUT WAR AND PEACE

The June 9 election is about war and peace, "the future of our children and opportunities for Hungarians in general", Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in an interview to the Patrióta YouTube channel on Sunday.

Orbán described the current European Commission as "the worst one" he had ever seen, which had turned into a "war council", and the European Parliament was slowly becoming a "war body", while people were moving towards peace. He said they had made "all kinds of plans that they are unable to put into action", like ending the war by adopting sanctions, and making industry competitive through a green transition, but industry seemed to be dying in the meantime. "It is not just about the war ... but we are also talking about the viability of European democracy as a whole," he said. "The will of the people is what should happen in Europe," he said. "If people want peace, then there should be peace. If they want the green transition to be rationalised, then let it be rationalised. If they don't want farmers to be ruined by these idiotic rules, then those rules should be changed." He said the election was not only about how Hungary's 21 seats should be distributed among the parties, adding that everything had a far broader meaning and far bigger things were at stake than usual.

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ORBÁN: DISCUSSIONS ABOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS 'BAD OMEN'

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, in an interview to the Patrióta YouTube channel on Sunday, said European politicians tended to think of the nuclear bomb mostly as a "tactical tool of deterrence" and not something that actually needed to be used. He added, however, that the problem was that no one had thought in the second world war that the Americans would use nuclear bombs. Orbán said he considered discussions about nuclear weapons a "bad omen". "The expression 'NATO mission in Ukraine' makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up," the prime minister said. He said talk of tactical nuclear weapons, depleted-uranium munitions, a world war itself, and sending a defence alliance's troops outside its territory was "terrifying". He said resistance to these things was not as strong among Westerners as it was among Hungarians, adding that "we're now in the midst of a process which ten years from now may be spoken of as part of the prelude to the third world war."

Concerning the assassination attempt against Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, Orbán said he had been shocked by the attack, and his first thought had been worry for his counterpart's life. His second thought, he said, had been that he would be "left on his own" in Brussels with his stance on the war and that he would have "all kinds of extra security rules" forced on him.

ORBÁN: EUROPEAN ECONOMY A CASUALTY OF WAR

Concerning the economic damage caused by the war, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in an interview to the Patrióta YouTube channel that European Union countries had so far poured around 100 billion euros into the conflict, as had the United States, adding that Europe's lost economic growth, which he said "has probably cost a couple hundred billion more", could also be counted among the "casualties" of the war. Orbán said though the people did not know it, they too were paying for the war, arguing that prices in shops "aren't like they are in peacetime".

"Not to mention that the number of casualties in the Russia-Ukraine war is already between 500,000 and 1 million," Orbán said. "And that's with just two Slavic countries at war, but not Europe." The prime minister said he regularly asked the question as to how many more weapons and how much more money it would take to push the Russians out of Ukraine, but that the only answer he was getting was that "Putin can't be allowed to win". Europe, he said, was drifting into a war without there even being estimates regarding the amount of money and equipment that would be needed for it to reach its military objective, adding that he had "never seen anything more irresponsible".

Orbán noted that around 57 million people died in the first and second world wars, with Hungary,

too, suffering a death toll of more than 1.5 million. "If they could've lived normal family lives, Hungary today wouldn't have demographic problems, and neither would Europe, and there wouldn't be any room left for migration," the prime minister said. "These are things we lost with the war," he said, adding that every European war "is also a European civil war where we're killing each other". Therefore every European leader's first reflex in any war should be to prevent an escalation, and all armed conflicts should be deemed a failure, he said.

Concerning the topic of mandatory military service which is gaining traction in western Europe, Orbán said that after peace had been established in Europe, "we all thought this wasn't necessary". "It would be good to stick with the current situation and let a professional army handle things, and there is some fundamental knowledge that can be passed on to young people even without military service," he added. "We don't want someone else to decide on the deployment of our military-age youth," the prime minister said, adding, however, that Manfred Weber, the head of the European People's Party "is talking about this and a pan-European military to which conscription would be mandatory". "That's something we're not going to do. Forget it. That's one of the crazy ideas," Orbán said.

The prime minister said the more stable the Hungarian government was and the clearer people's opinion on war and peace and

support of peace was, the greater chance he had to keep the country out of the war. He said the “case of NATO” was more difficult, arguing that the government had a “good understanding of the European Union’s efforts to push us into the war”, but NATO was a defence alliance that now wanted to start down on the path of becoming party to the war. “So we must also continue to stand for peace in NATO and prevent them from forcing us into the war, regardless of the military arguments they’d use; this is something we must stay out of in the end,” Orbán said. He said there were some who argued in the opposite direction, adding that though those arguments may not be illogical, they posed such a grave risk to Hungary “that could be measured in tens and hundreds of thousands of lost young people”. He said Hungary therefore had to do everything it could to stay out of the conflict.

On the topic of global economic competition, the prime minister said that competitors that dropped out found themselves at a disadvantage, and Europe was in this situation now. The Americans could easily sell their excess oil and gas, having prohibited the Europeans from buying from the Russians, he added. Meanwhile, the Russians, he said, had developed the techniques for moving gas around the world by tankers and via LNG terminals. And the Chinese saw that the changing balance of power was playing into their hands, Orbán said.

ORBÁN: PRO-PEACE SIDE ‘MUST LAUNCH COUNTERATTACK ON TWO FRONTS’

“Those of us who are pro-peace must launch a counterattack on two fronts,” Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in an interview to the Patrióta YouTube channel on Sunday. One in Europe, where, he said, it was not only about having more pro-peace MEPs in the European Parliament than pro-war ones, but also about European voters pushing their own governments in the direction of “less war and more peace”. The other one, Orbán said, was the November election in the United States. He said that if “the current pro-war Democratic administration stays in power, it will be hard to move towards peace”. If Donald Trump returned, it would still not be easy, but that would enable clear, transparent and quick action, Orbán said. The prime minister said an immediate ceasefire was the most important thing now. “We need a sense of security, a perspective, so we can all believe that, of course, a big problem happened here, a war, but our leaders, both in Europe and America, have not lost their common sense.”

Orbán said it was not only US financier George Soros who was profiting off the war, but there were also others who were speculating, “the entire arms industry, and those who lend money for the purchase and production of arms”. He said there were huge monies and huge stakes

on the table, and it took four things for them to succeed. “First, you need weapons, and they will finance the production of weapons,” Orbán said. “Then, you need men who are willing to fight, like the Ukrainians. Then, you need governments who want this, and they need to be bought just as the left has been bought in Hungary. And the fourth important thing is the media; there needs to be a corrupt media that is either controlled by them or was created by them, which conveys a pro-war atmosphere.” Speaking about Hungary, Orbán said at least half the media here offered a liberal worldview and the other half had a conservative, national sovereigntist worldview. This wide scope for describing and interpreting the world was not available in the West, he said.

He said it mattered to “the war lobby” whether Hungary stayed out of the war or not, because if it turned out that a country can be successful by staying out, “they will fear that others could follow suit”. Therefore, he added, they would look to Hungary as a “dangerous example”.

ORBÁN: PEACE NEEDED TO RESTART ECONOMY

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán visited Hódmezővásárhely, in southern Hungary, on the campaign trail on Saturday, where he met the ruling Fidesz party’s mayoral candidate in the company of János Lázár, the minister of construction and transport, the PM’s press chief said. Speaking to

local voters, Orbán said Brussels “is dumping bag-loads of money into the war; money that it is taking out of people’s and businesses’ pockets”. “That’s why the European economy is stagnant,” Orbán said. “Peace is needed because peace saves lives and restarts the economy.”

Later on Saturday, the prime minister addressed the inauguration of a new sports hall in Mezőhegyes, in the southeast, where he said the number-one issue in the election campaign was the decision between war and peace, and that nothing had a better chance of building peace than sports. He said the government’s aim was to build the best quality facilities, adding that “if something is Hungarian, that should mean that it’s the best”. He said the new sports hall was an example of this approach. Orbán underlined the need for children to participate in sports, be in communities and learn to fulfil their obligations along with the importance of work and humility. “So this isn’t just a sports hall, but the biggest help parents can receive,” the prime minister said.

PRESIDENT SULYOK: HUNGARIANS, BULGARIANS BOUND BY SHARED DESTINY

Hungarians and Bulgarians are bound by a shared destiny and by friendship, President Tamás Sulyok said after talks with Rumen Radev, his Bulgarian counterpart, in Budapest on Saturday. Topics discussed by the

two presidents included the issue of ethnic minorities and bilateral economic relations, with special regard to energy security, Sulyok was quoted as saying in a press statement. Sulyok and Radev were in agreement that illegal migration must be stopped and its causes must be addressed rather than managing the symptoms. He noted that dozens of Hungarian police officers were serving in Bulgaria in the framework of border police cooperation. They also agreed that the war in Ukraine must be resolved through diplomatic efforts, and urged a ceasefire and a just and sustainable peace. Sulyok said Hungary remained committed to the full accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union’s passport-free Schengen zone. He said ethnic minorities were an important link in Hungary’s relations and the country’s Bulgarian minority is represented by a national minority advocate in the Hungarian National Assembly. Sulyok noted that promoting the EU accession of the countries of the Western Balkans was among the priorities of Hungary’s upcoming presidency of the Council of the EU.

Radev said the two countries faced multiple challenges, “so we need even closer cooperation between Bulgaria and Hungary to bridge these”. He said the discussions had touched on the issues of trade, finance and tourism, but there were many other opportunities for cooperation. He cited as examples sectors with high value-added such as the defence sector.

He said energy security was of key importance and pledged that Bulgaria would remain a stable partner in gas transit deliveries in future.

Later on Saturday, the two presidents attended the inauguration and consecration of the Bulgarian Cultural and Educational Centre in Budapest’s 9th district. In his address at the ceremony, Sulyok said the inauguration of the centre was about the vitality of Hungary’s ethnic Bulgarian community. The Bulgarian community had a lot to draw on, he said, adding that their culture was a combination of accumulated knowledge and preserved traditions. Hungarians and Bulgarians, he said, were bound by the similarities in their history and by the Danube River, but even more importantly, by friendship, shared values, and the appreciation of each other’s culture.

ORBÁN HOLDS TALKS WITH BULGARIAN PRESIDENT

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán met Bulgarian President Rumen Radev for talks at his office on Saturday, the PM’s press chief said. Orbán and Radev reviewed Hungary’s programme for its upcoming presidency of the Council of the European Union, one of whose key elements is the stability of the Western Balkans, Bertalan Havasi told MTI. The two leaders were in agreement that cooperation between their countries played a key part in promoting peace and development in the region.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY, BULGARIA'S ALLIANCE EXTENDS TO ENERGY SUPPLY

Hungary and Bulgaria have a close alliance on the security of natural gas supply and the use of nuclear energy as well, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said in Budapest on Saturday, adding that this contributed greatly to Hungary's long-term energy security. According to a foreign ministry statement, Szijjártó said he had held talks with Bulgarian Energy Minister Vladimir Malinov, who is accompanying President Rumen Radev on his official visit to Budapest. Most of the natural gas Hungary imports is delivered via Bulgaria through the TurkStream pipeline which runs from Russia to Hungary via Türkiye, Bulgaria and Serbia, Szijjártó noted. Hungary received 5.6 billion cubic metres of gas via this delivery route last year, which accounts for around 65% of the country's annual consumption, the minister said. "So we clearly have an interest in the TurkStream gas pipeline remaining a secure and reliable route for gas deliveries to Hungary," he said. "Bulgaria has once again guaranteed that we can continue to rely on them and their fair approach in the coming period, and that the TurkStream gas pipeline will continue to function as one of Europe's most secure and predictable routes," he added. Hungary has received over 2.5 billion cubic

metres of gas via TurkStream so far this year, and this volume is expected to more than double by the end of the year, Szijjártó said.

Meanwhile, Szijjártó highlighted Hungary and Bulgaria's cooperation in the area of nuclear energy, noting that nuclear power accounted for a significant share of both countries' energy supply. "Bulgaria also has a nuclear power plant and it is planning to increase the long-term share of nuclear energy in its energy mix, as are we," he said. "The expansion of the Paks plant is progressing well, with 17,000 out of 75,000 piles already in place where the two new reactors will be, and the first concrete remains on track to be poured by the end of the year," Szijjártó said. "And that'll be an important milestone in the construction that will be key in terms of the schedule for the coming period." He emphasised that Hungary and Bulgaria rejected any negative discrimination against nuclear energy. Hungary, he added, considered any attempts to undermine its nuclear cooperation or initiatives aimed at restricting the use of nuclear energy an attack on its energy security.

MENCZER: DECISION BETWEEN WAR AND PEACE THE TOP ISSUE IN EP ELECTION

The most important question that will be decided in the European parliamentary election is whether Europe will go to war or there will

be peace, Tamás Menczer, the communications director of the ruling Fidesz-Christian Democrat alliance, said on Sunday. Menczer told public broadcaster Kossuth Radio that those who said this was not the most important question were lying. "Although the left says the war isn't the most important issue in Europe today, that's because they're pro-war and don't want to talk about this," he said. "Those who are pro-war gobble up those who are weak, as can be seen in Germany," Menczer said, pointing out that Germany had started out by sending only helmets to the war, but today they were sending tanks and wanted conscription. Menczer cited Germany's defence minister as suggesting the introduction of conscription, adding that Manfred Weber, the head of the European People's Party, wanted to introduce it at the EU level. Other German politicians, he said, were saying that conscription should also apply to women. The communications director said the Hungarian prime minister needed to defend the country's peace "one negotiation at a time". This, he added, was only possible if people expressed clear support for peace and Viktor Orbán in the June 9 election. Menczer said the two conditions for stopping the "common European ship" he said was "heading towards war at enormous speed" were the EP elections and the US presidential election in November. He added that it was becoming increasingly clear to people in every European

country “that what is happening is not in their interest”. He said that if other European countries also sent pro-peace politicians to the EP and if Donald Trump won the US presidential election, there would be a chance “to stop this pro-war trend”.

KARÁCSONY PLEDGES TO EXTEND LIFE EXPECTANCY IN BUDAPEST BY FIVE YEARS

Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony, who heads the list of the Párbeszéd, Democratic Coalition and Socialist parties in the Budapest municipal election, said on Saturday that he will aim to extend residents’ life expectancy by five years during his next term if re-elected. Karácsony noted that average life expectancy in Budapest is shorter by five years than in major European cities and said this encouraged him that “everything we do -- whether it’s about city transport, housing or culture -- should serve to make life better in the capital”. “Let us set politics back on its feet so that it will be about our lives,” he said. “Let Budapest be a prosperous, resilient city; let it be our little republic; let it be our shared home, a city where it’s better to live and where we can live longer, at least by five years.” The mayor said Hungary had the highest ratio of deaths from preventable causes among European Union member states, which would not change without a fundamental reform of the state health sector, but there was a lot that a municipality could do about the

matter. He said the city would continue its outpatient care programme in which around 14,000 free CT and MRI scans have been conducted in the capital since November 2020.

Karácsony also talked about what he called a “housing crisis” in Budapest and pledged to launch a big municipal housing programme financed from EU funds to create more affordable housing in the city. On the issue of homelessness, he said the city council’s homelessness strategy was not only about the symptoms, but rather about helping people in need avoid losing their homes, adding that 7.4 billion forints (EUR 19.2m) would be spent on this from EU funding. The mayor also touched on the issue of air pollution in Budapest, which, he said, was mainly caused by heating and transport. He pledged to spend 1 billion forints also from EU funds to support households struggling to pay energy bills and 2.5 billion forints from the city’s own funds to set up a building renovation fund, which would be expanded to 10 billion forints later. He said 100 billion forints would be spent on community transport from EU funds, adding that the aim was not to eliminate car traffic in Budapest but a balance had to be found and the city needed a tolerable level of traffic.

DK CALLS ON PARLT TO INITIATE REMOVAL OF PRESIDENT SULYOK FROM OFFICE

Klára Dobrev, who heads the party list of the Democratic Coalition-Socialists-

Párbeszéd alliance in the European Parliament elections, has called for parliament to start proceedings to remove President Tamás Sulyok from office. Speaking at an online press conference on Sunday, Dobrev asked MPs of DK, Párbeszéd and the Socialist Party to initiate the proceedings in Parliament along with the MPs of the other “democratic parties”. She noted that DK had submitted all evidence to the chief prosecutor and filed a criminal complaint on suspicion of high-value fraud and abuse of office in a case involving President Sulyok, and had written to the deputy head of the Constitutional Court that Sulyok should be made to repay the salary he “unlawfully took as Constitutional Court judge due to the conflict of interest”. If the president will not resign, she said, he could be forcibly removed from office by parliament, but initiating that procedure requires support from one-fifth of MPs. Dobrev noted that her party had already started collecting the signatures and they were waiting to see how ruling Fidesz would vote at the end of the procedure.

BODY OF SIXTH VICTIM IN VERŐCE BOAT ACCIDENT RECOVERED

The body of the sixth victim in a boat accident that happened on the River Danube at Verőce last weekend has been recovered, police said on Facebook on Sunday. The man’s body was discovered near Szigetújfalu (on Csepel Island), the Budapest Police

Headquarters (BRFK) said. In the accident the victims' boat collided with a cruise ship. One of the boat's eight passengers managed to swim ashore, six died and one is still missing. The cruise ship's captain, a Czech national, was detained on suspicion of failing to provide help to the boat after the collision. An investigation has found that the helmsman of the boat was drunk, steering the boat zig-zagging across the river, and straight in the direction of the ship. Before hitting the ship the boat took a sharp turn but a collision could not be avoided, the ship crushing the much smaller vessel, the police said.

BUDAPEST TO HOST 2025 WORLD JUDO CHAMPIONSHIPS

Budapest will host the World Judo Championships in 2025, the International Judo Federation (IJF) said at the close of this year's Abu Dhabi World Championships. The competition will begin on June 13, 2025, with the individual tournament running until June 19, according to the IJF's website. The event will conclude on June 20 with the mixed team tournament.

"Hungary is a country of sport and we're proud to have the IJF headquarters in Budapest," the website quoted IJF President Marius Vizer as saying. "We are looking forward to welcoming the entire judo family to the world championships next year in this country, known for its rich traditions, culture and values, those which resonate with judo." Budapest will be hosting the World Judo Championships for the third time next year, having previously hosted the event in 2017 and 2021.