

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Prime Minister's Press Office/Zoltán Fischer

PM Viktor Orbán meets French President Emmanuel Macron at Élysée Palace

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU leaders begin two-day summit in Brussels

CoE PACE summer session in Strasbourg

Stats office publishes May demography figures

Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Middle East

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: FRANCE BACKS HUNGARY'S EU AGENDA

France also supports Hungary's programme for its upcoming European Union presidency, with its focus on strengthening the European economy, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said after talks with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris.

In an interview with Hungarian public media, Orbán noted that Paris was his third stop in a series of meetings with EU heads of state and government after talks in Berlin and Rome. Hungary is taking over the EU's rotating presidency next month, he said, adding that his talks with Macron had covered French-Hungarian relations and the bloc's next six months. "After Berlin and Rome, we reached an agreement here as well and received approval for the next six months under the Hungarian presidency to be about improving the competitiveness of the European economy," the prime minister said. Orbán said he and Macron had also touched on EU enlargement in the Western Balkans. He said certain Western Balkan countries had been waiting for 15 years to join the EU. "This is incorrect, bad, perhaps even humiliating," Orbán said. He said an overwhelming majority of member states wanted the Western Balkan countries, including Serbia, to join the EU as soon as possible, adding that Hungary would work towards this in the coming period.

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ORBÁN, MACRON DISCUSS BILATERAL TIES

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said he and French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed the development of bilateral relations and agreed to further strengthen them, at a meeting in Paris. Currently 45,000-50,000 Hungarian families make a living at French-owned companies in Hungary, and bilateral trade turnover has doubled in ten years, Orbán said, adding that one of France's biggest companies was also involved in the Hungarian state's reacquisition of Liszt Ferenc International Airport. Orbán said he had met representatives of that company on Tuesday, and today he and Macron had reaffirmed that this was not merely an investment but also a major development programme that was important to both France and Hungary.

Orbán said they had also spoken about European affairs at their meeting. He noted that France is leading a European nuclear coalition of EU countries that say clean energy is impossible without nuclear energy. Hungary has been a part of the coalition since the beginning, he noted, adding that they had clarified the details of their cooperation in the matter. The prime minister noted that French companies are also heavily involved in the upgrade of Hungary's Paks nuclear power plant. Orbán said he and Macron had also agreed on expanding their defence industry cooperation. France has already

brought defence industry investments to Hungary, but the two countries are also exploring new opportunities for cooperation, he said.

ORBÁN: HUNGARY IN FAVOUR OF INVOLVING EVERYONE IN EU DECISIONS

The European Union's leadership positions have been decided, but Hungary has always been in favour of involving everyone in European decisions, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said after talks with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris. Orbán said it was "not good" if the most important positions for the next five years along with their corresponding programmes were divided up on a party basis "by those who appointed themselves for this", warning that it was "never good" if there was a "governing party and an opposition, a majority and a minority" in the EU. Everyone should be included, he said, adding that this step had become "a coalition of the parties supporting the war and migration", which Hungary had a duty to oppose.

ORBÁN: HUNGARY FOCUSED ON CEASEFIRE, PEACE

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said his talks with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris had also covered the war in Ukraine, noting that Hungary and France had "significant disagreements" in the matter. "I made it clear to the president that Hungary isn't

concerning itself with either Ukraine or Russia; it's concerning itself with peace," the prime minister said. He said Hungary was not against one country or another, but against war. "It's the war that we want to stop, so the most important goal for us is for there to be a ceasefire as soon as possible and to prevent further deaths," he said.

In response to a question, Orbán said Chinese-Hungarian relations were not a topic of discussion at the meeting. "Everyone knows that Hungary has had balanced and good relations with China since historical times, and China has also elevated its cooperation with Hungary to a very high level," he said. He said the EU was aware of China's role in the modernisation of Hungary's economy, and China has offered Hungary a role in the modernisation of its own economy. "This entails an ever-increasing economic cooperation, to which the Europeans have no objections, nor can they," he said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY TO OPEN NEW ACCESSION CHAPTERS WITH SERBIA

During its European Union presidency starting on July 1, Hungary will open new chapters in accession negotiations with Serbia and hold inter-governmental talks with all five Western Balkans membership candidates as part of its bid to speed up EU enlargement in the region, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said in Paris. Speaking at a conference of the Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development (OECD), Péter Szijjártó said Hungary also planned to close at least seven chapters with Montenegro, open the first ones with Albania and adopt the negotiation framework with Bosnia-Herzegovina, a first step to opening the first chapter of talks. Hungary will also strive to start “substantive talks with the new, strongly pro-integration government of North Macedonia,” he added. The integration of those countries “is in the economic as well as political and security interest of Hungary”, he said. Hungarian investments in the region have reached 2.5 billion euros and trade has grown four-fold since 2010, to over 7 billion euros, he said. Hungary is also aiding the process by sending experts and by training officials to navigate “the complicated accession process”, he said. Szijjártó said central Europe and the Western Balkans could be a “bridge” between East and West, much needed “for a return to East-West cooperation based on mutual respect, which could show the way out of the current turbulent era riddled with crises.” Hungary is ready to take on that role and to support Western Balkans states in acting similarly, he added.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: EU ENLARGEMENT IN W BALKANS ‘ECONOMIC AS WELL AS POLITICAL, SECURITY INTEREST’

Integrating Western Balkan countries is a vital economic interest as well

as a political and security need, and the European Union’s track record in this respect “is shameful and unacceptable”, Péter Szijjártó, the foreign minister, said in Paris. Speaking at a conference of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the minister said that Hungary valued highly the OECD’s activities in the Western Balkans which had aided the region’s stability, peace and development. In the course of Hungary’s upcoming EU presidency, the government therefore wants to tighten cooperation between the EU and the OECD, he added. Western Balkan states, he said, had been waiting for more than 15 years on average to join the bloc. Unless the integration process was speeded up, the credibility of the entire enlargement policy “will be at risk”, he said. Szijjártó called for accession standards to be based on merit, adding that this should apply to “everyone”. “Double standards are unacceptable,” he added.

Arguing that the bloc’s competitiveness was in decline, he said the Western Balkans could add fresh impetus and dynamism to the bloc, and the EU now needed the Western Balkans more than the other way around, but the latter would not wait indefinitely. Meanwhile, Szijjártó lamented that free trade and global economic cooperation was being replaced by “uncoupling and de-risking”. The minister hailed the OECD for being “the last international organisation that has managed to

avoid politicisation”, adding that the organisation was undergirded by “common sense and professionalism”.

BÓKA: HUNGARY PURSUES STRONG EUROPE POLICY

Hungary is pursuing a strong Europe policy and represents a clear European alternative, the minister in charge of EU affairs said, adding that “this vision for Europe must be reflected in our work”. János Bóka said on Facebook that during Hungary’s upcoming EU presidency “we will act as a fair intermediary that loyally cooperates with all member states and institutions”. “At the beginning of a new institutional term, we can initiate a debate and show direction in matters that are important to us,” he said. Hungary viewed the task “as an opportunity and an obligation”, he added. Commenting on the work that Hungary was facing, he said 122 legislative dossiers were expected to be brought over from the previous presidency. Within these, progress is planned to be made in 55 dossiers in the Council and in 30-35 dossiers during talks between the Council and the European Parliament, he added. The minister also said that some 1,500 Council working group meetings were planned to be held, and 37 formal meetings in Brussels and Luxembourg. Also, 230 events will be held in Hungary connected to the presidency, including 16 informal Council meetings, an informal

European Council meeting and the European Political Community summit. Bóka also noted that Hungary has been an EU member for 20 years and it had already fulfilled the presidency once, 13 years ago.

DEFMIN DISCUSSES EUROPE'S SECURITY, WAR WITH US AMBASSADOR

The defence minister said he discussed Europe's security situation and the risks posed by the war in Ukraine with David Pressman, the US ambassador to Hungary, on Wednesday. In a post on Facebook, Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky noted that NATO is holding a summit in Washington, DC in less than two weeks. Hungary joined the military alliance that marks its 75th anniversary this year 25 years ago, the minister said. Hungary is a committed and loyal NATO ally, Szalay-Bobrovniczky said. The country will however not contribute money, weapons or soldiers to the alliance's coordination mission on weapons deliveries to Ukraine and military training, but will not block such efforts, either, he said. "I informed Ambassador Pressman about the Hungarian government's step that will affect American soldiers serving at the military air base in Pápa," the minister said, noting that a draft legislation allowing the US soldiers to obtain Hungarian number plates in a simplified procedure would soon be launched for a public consultation.

TOP COURT UPHOLDS ELECTION CTTEE DECISION, KARÁCSONY REMAINS MAYOR

Hungary's supreme court has upheld the decision of the National Election Office, "meaning that I will remain Budapest's mayor for the next five years", Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony said. Karácsony submitted a request to the top court himself for the results of the local election to be annulled, after a recount of invalid votes narrowed his lead over his challenger, Dávid Vitézy, to 41 votes. "Of course, I accept the decision of the independent Hungarian court," he said on Facebook. Karácsony said he had petitioned for a repeat election due to lack of transparency in the election process. "The binding decision of the Kúria has now closed that argument. I am, of course, not resigning from the mayoralty, the ones who should resign are the people who tried to mislead Budapest citizens and were unable to even organise a proper recount," he said. "While I'm not accusing anyone of election fraud, it is remarkable that Fidesz-led districts found nearly two-and-a-half times as many new Vitézy ballots as opposition districts," he said. The recount came after an election campaign in which Karácsony accused Fidesz of having attempted to sway the ballot numerous times. "They started by putting local and European parliamentary elections on the same day to confuse voters. Then they changed rules of the election of the Budapest

Assembly at the last minute," he said. Also, Fidesz's candidate, Alexandra Szentkirályi, stepped back and endorsed Dávid Vitézy at the last moment, he said.

Meanwhile, Vitézy, who ran in the June 9 ballot as a candidate of LMP-Greens and the With Vitézy for Budapest association, said in response that "I congratulate Gergely Karácsony on the supreme court's decision to reject his petition". "After the court's rejection of his petition, perhaps no one has ever celebrated the independent Hungarian courts in a manner he [Karácsony] is doing now," Vitézy said on Facebook. He noted that Hungary's law on election procedures ensures both him and Karácsony the option of lodging a constitutional complaint. Vitézy called the incumbent mayor's recent "running amok" around the ballot "quite concerning" from the point of view of the city. "By demanding a repeat election for mayor, Karácsony has ruined his own legitimacy," he added. Instead of defending "the republic of Budapest", Karácsony had proved again that his own political survival was more important to him than any democratic principle, "more important than the city itself", said Vitézy.

FIDESZ EP GROUP: EP CAN'T BE REFUGE FOR CRIMINALS

The European Parliament cannot be a refuge for criminals, "be they Eva Kalinak, Marc Tarabella or Ilaria Salis", the EP delegation of Hungary's ruling

alliance of Fidesz and the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) said, vowing to do everything possible to prevent abuses of immunity. In a statement, they noted last February's armed attacks in Budapest by a group of foreigners against those they had believed to be participants in an event "that ended up not happening". The MEPs noted that charges had been raised against Italian antifa activist Ilaria Salis in connection with the attacks. Since Salis was elected to the EP in the June 9 elections, the court, in line with international law, suspended the proceedings against her and released her from house arrest, allowing her to return to Italy, the statement added.

Fidesz MEP Enikő Győri said the delegation respected the decision of the Italian electorate, but "firmly condemns" that the Italian Green and Left Alliance had "nominated her for the election so that she could hide behind her newly-acquired immunity from the consequences of her actions a year and a half ago". "We trust that the European Parliament will suspend Ilaria Salis's immunity when the Budapest court initiates it, so that she will not be able to evade justice," Győri said.

LMP: HUNGARY WON'T BECOME 'BATTERY-PLANT COLONY' IF PLEBISCITE SUCCESSFUL

If the referendum on the government decree on priority investments launched by opposition LMP is successful, then Hungary "will be

protected" against becoming "a battery-plant colony", an official of the green party said, noting that the Constitutional Court has ruled that a plebiscite on priority investments can go ahead. For this to happen, 200,000 signatures must be collected in four months, Antal Csárdi, the green party's deputy group leader, told a press conference. He insisted that the shores of Lake Balaton, Lake Fertő and other big lakes, as well as "the whole country", would be prevented from being "sold off" if aims of the party's initiative prevailed. He said the decree on priority investments served the sole purpose of bypassing all existing legislation which put regulatory curbs on certain kinds of investments, so opening the way for the pursuit of projects that benefitted "Fidesz oligarchs".

GOVT AUTHORITY LAUNCHES PROBE INTO RYANAIR, WIZZ AIR, SUNEXPRESS, EUROWINGS FLIGHTS DELAYS

The Budapest Government Office has said it launched a probe against Ryanair, Wizz Air, SunExpress and Eurowings over significant flight delays seen in recent days. The office said the probe is aimed to establish whether the airlines complied with the provisions of the relevant European Union regulation on providing information and assistance to passengers. If a violation is suspected during the probe, the government office will initiate the necessary procedures against the airline concerned, it added.

POLICE HEAR 14 SUSPECTS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AFTER WEEK-LONG ACTION IN EUROPEAN COOPERATION

Police have identified 17 victims and questioned 14 people suspected of crimes related to human trafficking after a week-long campaign early in June, in cooperation with Europol, Interpol and Frontex, the National Bureau of Investigation of Hungary's Rapid Response Police (KR NNI) said on the official police.hu website. Some 40 countries participated in the campaign held within the framework of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) between June 3 and 9, aiming to identify and eliminate instances of human trafficking, police.hu said. The Hungarian nationals questioned during the campaign are suspected of human trafficking, forced labour, facilitating prostitution and other prostitution-related crimes, the statement said. Of the 17 people identified as victims of sexual exploitation or forced labour, 9 were under the age of 18. Police have started three new procedures on the suspicion of human trafficking and forced labour, the statement said. In cooperation with the German police, Hungarian police have identified three Hungarians who have been forcing a woman with mental and physical disabilities into prostitution in Germany. The three suspects, one woman and two men, were arrested on June 4.