

PHOTO OF THE DAY



PM Viktor Orbán (I) and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the EU summit in Brussels

MTI/PM's Press Office/Zoltán Fischer

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU summit ends in Brussels

CoE PACE summer session in Strasbourg

Stats office publishes employment, industrial output, hotel occupancy figures for May

Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Middle East

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: HUNGARY WON'T BACK VON DER LEYEN'S MANDATE

Hungary cannot support the extension of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's mandate, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in Brussels on Thursday.

In a doorstep interview ahead of a two-day European Council summit, Orbán said Von der Leyen had used the rule of law as a party political tool against Hungary. Orbán said a newly elected Polish government had implemented changes "that were at least questionable." "When I asked in a letter whether we Hungarians could do what the new Polish government did in Poland, they didn't even deign to answer. We do not think the president of such a Commission should stay in place." He said the European People's Party (EPP), the Socialists and Liberals had formed a "coalition" to name the new leaders of European Union institutions. "That is a party coalition of lies and deception," he said. Orbán called the agreement "shameful", and said it had been set up based on party affiliations, without regard to the "bad performance of the past five years" or plans for the future. The EPP "has collected some of the right-wing votes and shifted them to the left," Orbán said. "This is impertinence in the face of European voters," he said. "We have no reason to support this abuse of power."

Hungary Matters is an English-language newsletter produced and distributed by the Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA) with content provided by Duna Media Service Provider exercises copyright over all content. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, redistributed or transmitted without prior written permission from the publisher, with the exception of copies made by individuals for private use, educational purposes or scholarly research, provided that such transmissions do not exceed the extent justified by the purpose and are not aimed at financial gain, even indirectly, and the source name are indicated at all times.

All rights reserved. Enquiries should be made to the English Help Desk at +361 441 9340
For MTI's real time coverage please visit <http://english.mti.hu>, <http://econews.hu>



ORBÁN: 'WE TAKE COUNTRY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS AS COMPLIMENTS'

Speaking ahead of a European Council summit in Brussels, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said regarding country specific recommendations to Hungary in EU reports that "we take those as compliments." Those are important tools of Hungarian economic policy and contribute to Hungarian growth's far outstripping the EU average, he added. "That's where Hungarian success comes from. They want to take that success away, but we shall not give it away," he said. Asked about Hungary's EU presidency starting on Monday, Orbán said its main focus areas were competitiveness and economic growth. Besides those issues, "which are supported by everyone," Hungary also seeks to promote peace and stop illegal migration, he added. "Large countries are backing 95% of our programmes," he added.

SZIJJÁRTÓ SLAMS US SECRETARY OF STATE'S 'NONSENSICAL' ACCUSATION AGAINST HUNGARY

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken made a "nonsensical accusation" against Hungary, Péter Szijjártó,

the foreign minister, said on his Facebook. Szijjártó said Blinken had criticised Hungary over the freedom of religion, saying officials used "anti-Semitic tropes". "This accusation is especially nonsensical from the foreign minister of a country where attacks of intimidation against Jewish people have increased dramatically in the recent period and where anti-Semitic unrest has taken place at universities," the minister said. "Meanwhile, Israel's national team and football clubs will play their matches in Hungary again in the next season because they feel safe here," Szijjártó said.

PM'S POLITICAL DIRECTOR: BRUSSELS ELITE MISINTERPRETING EUROPEAN VOTERS' WILL

The Brussels elite is misinterpreting European voters' will because whereas voters' preferences clearly reflect a shift to the right and right-wing parties have strengthened, they view the election results as if they were a reaffirmation of the elite's past era, the prime minister's political director said. Balázs Orbán said Hungary would be the member of a coalition in Brussels that urges changes and believes that past policies have been proven wrong and they failed, so the EU needs a new direction. Orbán said talks were under way with the participation of Hungarian ruling party MEPs, aiming to set up a large right-wing

sovereignist coalition in Europe that pursued policies based on patriotism. The various initiatives would be made public in the upcoming days, he added. "The Hungarian position remains unchanged," he said. "The European right wing sovereignist patriotic forces must work together and the more of them can cooperate, the stronger we can represent the European people's will in Brussels," he added.

FIRST DIRECT FLIGHT FROM GUANGZHOU ARRIVES IN BUDAPEST

The first scheduled direct flight from Guangzhou arrived in Budapest on Thursday. The launch of the new direct flight "is in line with Hungary and China's efforts to bolster relations based on mutually beneficial cooperation", Boglárka Illés, the foreign ministry's state secretary for bilateral relations, said after the Boeing 787-9 aircraft operated by China Southern landed at Budapest's Liszt Ferenc International Airport. Bilateral economic and trade ties are developing steadily, Illés told a press conference, adding that China was Hungary's ninth most important trading partner last year and its most important one outside Europe. Bilateral trade turnover exceeded 17 billion US dollars and China brought the largest volume of FDI to Hungary in 2023, she said. Illés said the government trusted that the

Chinese businesses already present in Hungary would further expand their investments and that even more leading Chinese companies would choose Hungary as their European investment destination. Hungary has more direct flights with China than any other country in the central and eastern European region, Illés said. She said the launch of the new flight put "an especially important region within reach", noting that Guangzhou was the capital of the economic powerhouse of Guangdong province. Illés said South China was a particularly important region in Hungarian-Chinese economic relations, with more than 85% of Chinese investments in Hungary coming from there.

Francois Berisot, the CEO of Liszt Ferenc International operator Budapest Airport, said the China Southern flight would create "countless opportunities" for Hungarian economic players, business travellers and the tourism sector. The flight will increase the number of seats on flights between Budapest and major Chinese cities by about 56,000 to over 400,000 this year, he said. Qu Guangji, executive vice president of China Southern, welcomed the launch of the new flight, saying it was not only important for the airline industry, but also a milestone in the two countries' relations. Gong Tao, China's ambassador to Hungary, said the growing number of direct flights between Budapest and major Chinese

cities made bilateral cooperation more comfortable. China Southern will operate the Budapest-Guangzhou flight four times a week.

PISA 2022 REPORT ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S FINANCIAL LITERACY RELEASED

The PISA 2022 report assessing the financial literacy of young people has been released and shows Hungary as ranking among the average of the 14 OECD countries examined, the Education Office (OH) said. The first large-scale international PISA study assessing the financial skills and knowledge of 15-year-olds was conducted in 2012. Participation is optional and Hungary joined it for the first time in 2022. The 2022 assessment covered 20 countries including 14 members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. According to the OH, Hungarian students scored 492 points which is close to the average 498 point score of the participating OECD countries. The points Hungarian students scored is, however, above the overall average score of 475 points. The OH noted that close to 82% of 15-year-old Hungarian students had the minimum or higher financial literacy skills expected from a social point of view. A detailed report on the Hungarian youth's results is expected to be released in the first half of July.

KSH: 6,284 BIRTHS, 9,501 DEATHS IN MAY

The number of births fell by 11% in May compared with the same month in the previous year, while deaths went down by 6.2%, according to preliminary data published by the Central Statistical Office (KSH). Meanwhile, the number of marriages was up by 1.2% with 5,510 couples tying the knot during the same period. Fully 6,284 children were born in May, while there were 9,501 deaths. The natural population loss was 3,217 people compared with 3,085 in May 2023. Fully 82,313 children were born between June 2023 and May 2024, 7.8% fewer than in the same period of last year. Altogether 125,668 people died in the same period, 5.0% fewer than last year. There were 8.0 live births and 13.3 deaths per thousand inhabitants in the first five months.

APPEALS COURT HANDS DOWN LOW-SECURITY PRISON SENTENCE, FINE IN BINDING RULING TO FORMER ROMA LEADER

A Budapest Appeals Court ordered in a binding ruling that János Agócs, the former head of the National Roma Self-government (ORÖ), serve his four-year term in a low-security correctional facility, and increased the fine imposed on him to 1 million forints (EUR 2,500).

Agócs was detained on corruption charges in September 2022. He was accused of offering his own position to lesser officials willing to pay 30 million forints for the post in the summer of that year. Agócs's plan was to make the prospect his deputy, then get him elected head of the body. The appeals court lowered the security degree of the prison sentence due to Agócs's deteriorating health. At the same time, it increased the original fine of 260,000 forints, on the basis of the environmental study showing Agócs's living conditions as being well above the average.

HUNGARIAN DEVELOPED VR SPACE CABIN PRESENTED

The first fully Hungarian developed simulation space cabin fitted with VR technology was presented in Budapest. The cabin dubbed SpaceBuzz-HU enabling virtual space travel will be provided free-of-charge to Hungarian schools to be used as part of an educational scheme presenting the vulnerability of the planet. Orsolya Ferencz, the ministerial commissioner in charge of space research at the foreign ministry,

told the event that SpaceBuzz would give students the opportunity to experience the operation of the International Space Station. The aim of the educational scheme is to attract the attention of students to nature and environmental protection, natural sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics, she said. The ministry has supported the project with 9 million forints (EUR 23,000). The first VR space cabin with a capacity to host 12 people will be built by the first half of 2025 when the Hungarian astronaut Tibor Kapu is set to travel to space, István Zentai, board chairman of the SpaceBuzz Hungary foundation, said.