

PHOTO OF THE DAY



PM Orbán (r) meets CoE Sec-Gen Thérèse Blanchet (l2) in Budapest

MTVI/PM's press office/Vivien Cher Benko

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events related to Hungary's EU presidency

Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Middle East

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: TALKS AIMED TO GAUGE ZELENSKY'S STANCE

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said that during his recent visit to Kyiv he had not aimed to convince President Volodymyr Zelensky but "gauge the limits of Kyiv's stance regarding the peace process".

Orbán said in a video interview to conservative Swiss daily Weltwoche on Wednesday that during the talks, he had aimed to leave behind "the not too flourishing ties" of recent times between the two countries, and concentrate on the future. He said he had talked about the large Hungarian community in Ukraine, and suggested that Ukraine put forward an action plan that would be beneficial for Ukraine's negotiations in the EU accession process as well as for the Hungarian minority. Orbán said he had not tried to "convince" Zelensky, nor had he made proposals. He said he had aimed to clarify Zelensky's "position and limits when we speak about peace". Orbán said that as the head of the country holding the European presidency, he was planning to prepare a report on "the possibility of peace" for the European Council. He therefore asked Zelensky to first start a ceasefire to speed up negotiations, he said. Orbán said Zelensky "was not very happy with the idea ... but he understood Hungary's position".

ORBÁN: EU FOREIGN POLICY CLOUT DEPENDS ON LEADERS OF LARGE COUNTRIES

On the matter of the EU as a power in foreign policy, Orbán said the issue depended on the leaders of large European countries. "If the Germans, French and Italians are not coming together and making decisions and suggestions for the others," but waste time on divvying up positions, change will not happen, he said. Orbán said his talks in Berlin, Rome and Paris had been the start of a "peace mission." He had tried "to convince the leaders that they should take the lead," otherwise Europe will disappear from the international arena, he warned.

PRESIDENT SULYOK: HUNGARY-AUSTRIA TIES 'EXCELLENT'

Ties between Hungary and Austria are "excellent", President Tamás Sulyok's office told MTI in a statement after talks between the presidents of the two countries in Vienna on Wednesday. Sulyok and Alexander Van der Bellen agreed that "in the current, extraordinary times good and balanced ties between neighbouring countries as well as regular communication are more important than ever," the statement said, adding that bilateral economic and cultural ties were also excellent, based on a strategic partnership and centuries of

historical contact. Sulyok expressed his support to plans to open a Hungarian language secondary school in Vienna.

On the subject of traffic restrictions at the Hungary-Austria border, they agreed that finding an early resolution to the problems and ensuring smooth crossing was in the interest of both countries, the statement said, noting "constructive talks" between the two governments.

Sulyok informed his counterpart about objectives of Hungary's European Union presidency, while both presidents highlighted the importance of increasing the EU's competitiveness, adding that an speedy accession of the Western Balkans to the EU was crucial. Sulyok also invited Van der Bellen to an official visit to Budapest.

According to the statement, Sulyok also met House Speaker Wolfgang Sobotka, and discussed issues around the war in Ukraine, and protection to the rights of ethnic minorities. At the talks, Sulyok noted Hungary's "zero tolerance for anti-Semitism" and expressed Hungary's support for Israel and that country's "right to self-defence". Sulyok condemned all forms of terrorism, but added that "the Palestinian people and Hamas are not the same." Sulyok also noted that Vienna's Collegium Hungaricum, "the first Hungarian cultural institution", was celebrating its first centenary this year.

After his talks, the president laid a wreath of commemoration at a monument of Hungarian physician Ignaz Semmelweis at Vienna's medical

university. Sulyok is scheduled to meet representatives of the Hungarian community in Austria and attend an opening concert of the Hungarian EU presidency in the evening.

SECRETARY-GENERAL OF COUNCIL OF EU ATTENDS CABINET MEETING

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán met on Wednesday morning Thérèse Blanchet, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union, who attended the first cabinet meeting the government held since Hungary took over the EU's rotating presidency. Blanchet and the members of the government reviewed at the joint working meeting the Hungarian presidency's goals and discussed the tasks ahead and the timeframe of completing them.

SZIJJÁRTÓ CONGRATULATES NEW DUTCH ECON MINISTER ON APPOINTMENT

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó has congratulated Dirk Beljaarts, the newly appointed economy minister of the Dutch government, in a letter posted in Hungarian on Facebook on Wednesday. Szijjártó expressed thanks and appreciation to Beljaarts, who is fluent in Hungarian, for his work during his service as an honorary consul over the past almost ten years and his achievements in boosting Dutch-Hungarian relations. He noted that for the EU presidency Hungary took over

on July 1 for six months, enhancing the community's competitiveness was a special priority in which the minister said "we count on the support of the Netherlands and you".

AZBEJ: HUNGARY SUPPORTS PEACE AND STABILITY

The Hungarian government "has a vision of Europe that supports peace and stability, not only in its immediate vicinity but for example in Africa and the Middle East," Tristan Azbej, Hungary's state secretary in charge of assistance to Christian communities worldwide, told MTI from Stuttgart by phone on Wednesday. The state secretary attended the opening of events commemorating the 2014 genocide of Iraqi Christians and Yazidis committed by the terrorist Islamic State, and said "in each case we must support peace rather than escalation."

He said "people in crisis zones should be helped to stay in their homelands rather than promote migration". Azbej said he had been invited by Yazidi survivor and Nobel Peace Prize winner Nadia Murad to represent the Hungary Helps programme. He noted that the Hungarian government had helped Iraq's Yazidi community with a total 1.1 million euros in the past six years, apart from the humanitarian and reconstruction programmes provided to that country.

The Yazidi genocide claimed 5,000 lives, with 6,000 young women being captured and subjected to sexual

slavery, he said, adding that some 500,000 people fled their homes and 150,000 were still "living from day to day" as internally displaced people. "Commemorating the genocide is also aimed to save those people from continued persecution and discrimination," Azbej said.

DEBRECEN UNI INAUGURATES PILOT RESEARCH LAB

The University of Debrecen, in eastern Hungary, has inaugurated a pilot research laboratory set up with 5.2 billion forints (EUR 13m) worth of European Union funding. Chancellor Zoltán Bács said at the ceremony on Tuesday that the pharmaceutical lab would operate in a development phase until 2026, then start a production phase following a 1 billion forint additional investment. The lab will have capacity for commercial production of virus- and bacteria-based biological active ingredients. Rector Zoltán Szilvássy said the lab would develop bacteriophages capable of eliminating antibiotic-resistant bacteria in hospitals. György Kossa, who heads the board of trustees of the foundation that runs the university, said the school had long focused on establishing a health-care industry ecosystem involving close cooperation with industry players. Culture and Innovation Minister Balázs Hankó underlined the special role attributed to universities in strengthening the

country's economy. He said that the Debrecen University was among the 13 universities undertaking to develop their science parks in the framework of the government's Neumann Janos Programme. The pilot research laboratory had been set up in the university's science park, said Hankó.

WIM WENDERS GUEST OF HONOUR AT BUDAPEST CLASSICS FILM MARATHON

German director Wim Wenders, a major figure of contemporary European film, will be the guest of honour at the Budapest Classics Film Marathon to be held in September, the National Film Institute said on Wednesday. The Budapest Classics Film Marathon, an international film festival of restored classics, will take place for the seventh time between 17 and 22 September 2024. It will show 12 films directed by Wenders, including such classics as Paris, Texas and Wings of Desire, as well as his 1977 film The American Friend which earned him international success. Wenders will receive in Budapest the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) 2024 award. Screenings will take place in the Uránia National Film Theatre, the Toldi Cinema, the French Institute Budapest and the Budapest Music Centre, as well as at outdoor venues in St. Stephen's Square in front of the Basilica. For programme details in English visit <https://nfi.hu/en/budapest-classics-film-marathon-2024>