

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/PM's press office/Cher Vivien Benko

PM Viktor Orbán and Russian President Vladimir Putin in talks in Moscow

UPCOMING EVENTS

PM Orbán attends Organisation of Turkic States summit in Azerbaijan

Events related to Hungary's EU presidency

Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Middle East

TOP STORY

ORBÁN HAS TALKS ABOUT PEACE WITH PUTIN IN MOSCOW

President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán exchanged views in the Kremlin on how to resolve the war in Ukraine and develop bilateral relations.

In his greetings in front of the press Orbán thanked Putin for receiving him "even under these difficult circumstances". He said Hungary was "slowly becoming the only country in Europe" that could speak to both warring sides. Orbán said he wanted to make use of this situation to discuss important matters with the Russian president and to gauge his stance on issues that are important for Europe. Commenting on the impending closed-door part of the meeting, Putin said he hoped "that we will have the opportunity to exchange views on building bilateral relations in this difficult situation and, of course, to talk about the prospects for the development of the biggest European crisis, I mean in the Ukrainian direction". Regarding finding a solution to the crisis in Ukraine, Putin added: "Of course, I am ready to discuss the details with you regarding this issue and I expect that you will also outline the position of your European partners." He also touched on bilateral ties, regretting that trade turnover was down 35%. "All in all, we have work to do and we will realise the projects," he added.

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ORBÁN: SOMEONE MUST MAKE PEACE FOR IT TO HAPPEN

Peace will not happen by itself, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told public radio in an interview on Friday. "Peace will come when someone makes it," he said in connection with the war in Ukraine. Orbán said that Hungary, as the holder of the EU's rotating presidency, did not have the mandate to negotiate on behalf of the European Union. "This never occurred to me," he said. He said his task was to demonstrate how the situation has unfolded in respect of how far each party could go, and once this had been revealed the leaders of the 27 EU member states may come to a decision. Henceforth, those authorised to negotiate "will do so". "But this is still very far off," the prime minister said. "We can only take the first steps on the road to peace." Orbán said that Europe should hold the compass of peace and humanity, humane thinking, and pursue a humane foreign policy, and it was likely that it could do more to move towards peace. Commenting on his recent meeting with President Volodymyr Zelensky, Orbán said Hungary knew its place and "the big countries" would handle the big peace negotiations, but in a vacuum of dialogue it was "very hard to imagine how to move in the direction of peace without it".

ORBÁN: MEETING WITH ZELENSKY ABOUT GAUGING HOW FAR HE COULD GO FOR SAKE OF PEACE

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, in an interview with public radio, said he had asked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at their meeting in Kyiv this week several questions to gauge where his red lines were and how far he could go for the sake of peace. Orbán said his job was to make the facts clear by going to the places where there was a threat of war that may have an impact on Europe and Hungary. The prime minister said Hungary could be useful for those who strove for peace. "The positions are far apart, but Hungary can get the parties off to a start along the long road ahead, with a ceasefire and peace negotiations at the end." Zelensky, he said, was unhappy about the idea of peace talks or a ceasefire as "the other side" may take advantage of the latter by redeploying forces. But it would be possible to overcome such a standoff "with some perspective and knowing that peace negotiations are only a few weeks or months off," he added.

The prime minister said there were "all sorts of surveys" after Europe had decided to "get involved in the war on Ukraine's side". Discussions and surveys about the war, he added, were also part of the war, meaning that they were "manipulated" or "hard to believe". Orbán mentioned his recent

visits to Berlin, Rome and Paris in preparation for Hungary's presidency of the Council of the European Union, along with his visit to Kyiv, where he said he had spoken to not just politicians and decision-makers but also "the average people". During his trips, he said he saw a kind of "moral pressure" for Europe to do more to "ease the tension of war" when conflict broke out in its neighbourhood that should not have. There was also a feeling, he added, expectations were too weighted towards waiting for America to act instead of taking more pro-active steps today. Also, people were worried about the impact of the war on Europe's economy, he said, citing cost-of-living worries in Western Europe and "war inflation everywhere".

ORBÁN: FRENCH ELECTION TO INFLUENCE FATE OF EUROPE AS A WHOLE

France's parliamentary election will not only influence the number of groups or representatives in the European Parliament but the future of the whole of Europe, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in an interview with public radio. Orbán said it was unprecedented in France for a right-wing party to make a breakthrough in a domestic election. The right, he added, had been cordoned off and excluded from French politics in recent decades, deemed unfit for cooperation by other parties. But they had broken through this cordon, Orbán said, "and if I'm right, not by a

small but by a big margin -- if we're interpreting the first round correctly." Such a momentous development in France would precipitate change "that will immediately affect the entire continent", he said, adding that this would also influence ties between Hungary and France. In one possible scenario, the right wing in France may win to an extent that it can form a government, but a confused situation may also emerge if its victory did not turn out to be decisive, and this could also affect European politics, he said. Marine Le Pen's party, he added, was "the biggest national group in the European Parliament ... so it isn't a matter of indifference how they decide their fate."

Regarding the Patriots for Europe group, Orbán said a founding meeting will take place on July 8. Parties will gather that have already decided to join but have not yet announced their intention to do so, he added. Orbán reiterated that the force could possibly end up being the second largest grouping in the EP.

ORBÁN: EU TARIFFS ON CHINA EVS RISK TRADE WAR

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has criticised the EU's tariffs on China's biggest electric vehicle manufacturers as "bad and ill-thought-out", warning that the measure could trigger a trade war. Orbán told public radio that the "biggest aim and the strongest hope" was that the tariffs would

only be temporary and would be lifted after four months. He said the European Commission had justified the introduction of the tariffs with the need to protect the interests of European manufacturers, adding, at the same time, that the leaders of the major carmakers he had spoken to ahead of the start of Hungary's EU presidency had strongly opposed the measure. "These kinds of bad and ill-thought-out decisions can push economic life towards a trade war", the prime minister warned, saying this "decision by the bureaucrats" could trigger counter-measures from the East. Hungary's interests, he said, lay in averting a trade war, because "we make our living by being able to sell what we produce in Hungary all over the world". "But if there's going to be a trade war then we won't be able to sell the products produced in Hungary, and this could eventually threaten jobs," he added.

Turning to the economy, Orbán said there were encouraging signs which should neither be overestimated nor underestimated. He underlined the importance of the tourism sector, noting that the money spent by tourists in Hungary made its way into the Hungarian economy. He said the government was trying to reach an agreement with Hungarian employers that would result in good wages, as this was "the most important tool in the fight against inflation". "We're burning the candle at both ends ... in the interest of easing the cost of living," he said, adding that 60% of bookings in

the tourism sector were from domestic and 40% from foreign travellers, which indicated that "there's something Hungarians can afford here at home". Orbán said that in addition to the government's housing programmes that have helped 250,000 families the home renovation subsidy scheme would help 20,000-30,000 families. He said employment data and the state of the construction sector -- where a bigger slowdown had been expected -- were both encouraging, but it would not be until the US presidential election in the autumn and when the outcome of the war became clearer that it would be known whether a general improvement in the situation could be expected. "We have a lot of work to do before then," Orbán said.

ORBÁN: FLIGHT DELAYS 'UNACCEPTABLE'

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has slammed the recent series of flight delays and cancellations as "unacceptable", saying it was "impossible not to be outraged" by what was happening in the sector. "It's not about whether or not air travel is well-organised, but that there's not even the bare minimum of humanity," Orbán told public radio. He added that most passengers had been working throughout the entire year to be able to use their savings to go on holiday, and this was "one of the important events of the year" for most Hungarian families. Orbán said passengers were not being

shown “any humanity” by airlines when they were not kept informed about the situation and the long delays. He said what was happening at Liszt Ferenc International Airport was a consequence of the period before the state had re-acquired it, adding that he trusted that the situation would improve “when the actual physical takeover happens”. He said it was not just the airport’s operator that needed to do a better job, but also air traffic control and the ground crew. Orbán said the government expected staff and crew that interacted with Hungarians and tourists to show “more understanding and humanity”, adding that he had instructed his ministers to enforce those expectations.

On the topic of vehicle fuel prices, the prime minister said the government would not tolerate Hungarians having to pay more for fuel than the average price in neighbouring countries. Hungary’s vehicle fuel companies must honour the agreement they signed with the government, he said. “We can’t have prices keeping to the regional average for a while only to then slip out of that range,” Orbán said, adding that “this is what’s happening now”. He said that for now, the government was asking fuel companies “verbally” to keep to the agreement. “But we won’t say it twice. We have an agreement and it must be honoured. We tolerate Hungarians being made to pay more for fuel than what is the average price in neighbouring countries. And if this

polite message doesn’t work, we’ll take steps.”

MENCZER: ORBÁN ON ‘PEACE MISSION’

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is on a “peace mission”, Tamás Menczer, the communications director of the ruling Fidesz-Christian Democrat alliance, said. “A ceasefire is possible,” Menczer said on Facebook. “It is a matter of will. We have to talk about it and work for it.” In a video message, Menczer said those who said a ceasefire and peace talks were impossible “are simply lying”. “Why? Because a ceasefire is merely a matter of political decision which has to be made by politicians, whether it be Moscow, Washington, Kyiv or Brussels,” Menczer said. “And politicians can indeed make decisions, and they do. They can decide the direction they want to go in.” “So a ceasefire and peace talks are a question of political decision which is definitely possible and a matter of will,” he added.

SARKOZY: ORBÁN ‘DOING THE RIGHT THING’ TO RESTORE DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS

Viktor Orbán “is doing the right thing” in his attempts to restore diplomatic communication channels as part of efforts to end the war in Ukraine, former French president Nicolas Sarkozy said in an interview to Mandiner weekly in connection with the Hungarian prime minister’s visit to Moscow on Friday. “The

first step on the road to peace is to restore the communication channels,” Sarkozy said. Mandiner said Orbán had discussed his visit to Moscow with Sarkozy.

OFFICIAL: EC’S TEMPORARY TARIFFS ON CHINESE ELECTRIC CARS BAD FOR EUROPEAN CUSTOMERS

The European Commission is implementing temporary punitive tariffs on electric cars imported from China, a government commissioner noted on Facebook, adding that the decision was “certainly not good for European customers”. István Joó, who is also the head of national investment promotion agency HIPA, said the tariffs hampered competition when it came to price and quality and would harm Europe’s car industry, especially German companies manufacturing in China. Further, the measure would hold back research and development as protectionism “does not help these processes”. Moreover, economic ties between Europe and China would suffer, he said, insisting that the EC was acting wilfully and its policy was not supported by the biggest automotive industry players. “Hopefully the measure genuinely will be temporary,” Joó wrote.

HUNGARY MAY INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT FALLS 5.2%

Hungarian industrial output in May fell by an unadjusted 5.2%, the

Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a first reading of data. Adjusted for the number of working days, output fell by 4.9%. Output of most manufacturing sector branches fell, KSH said. Among the biggest segments, output of the automotive, the electrical equipment, and the computer, electronics and optical equipment segments dropped, while output of the food, drink and tobacco segment grew from a year earlier, it added. Month on month, output was down 1.1% based on seasonally and working day-adjusted data. In the January-May period, industrial output declined by an annual 2.4%.

Commenting on the data, Gergely Fábián, the national economy ministry's state secretary for industrial policy and technology, said Hungary's industrial performance had been hampered by the international environment -- the weakening of the German economy in particular --

while the essential components of the country's economy such as real wages, retail turnover and employment were doing well. He said low inflation provided a clement environment for domestic industry to slough off caution, while consumption was also reinvigorated owing to government measures encouraging investments, and he referred to a new home renovation subsidy scheme which has just started, expected to generate an order book approaching 130 billion forints (EUR 332m) in the construction industry and building materials trade.

HUNGARY TRADE IN MAY POSTS SURPLUS OF EUR 1.146 BN

Hungary's trade balance in May posted a surplus of 1.146 billion euros, narrowing from 1.750 billion in April, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a first reading of data. Exports fell

by an annual 8.8% to 11.922 billion euros, while imports dropped by 9.0% to 10.776 billion. In the January-May period, Hungary posted a trade surplus of 6.739 billion euros, with exports down 4.9% to 60.945 billion euros and imports 11.6% lower at 54.406 billion.

HUNGARY MAY RETAIL SALES UP 3.6%

Retail sales in Hungary grew by an annual 3.6% in May, down from 3.7% in April, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. Adjusted for calendar-year effects, the May figure was 3.6% higher. Adjusted food sales grew by 6.3%, non-food sales by 1.8%, while vehicle fuel sales eased by 0.7%. Month on month, sales edged up 0.1%, adjusted for seasonal and calendar-year effects. In the January-May period, retail sales rose by an unadjusted 3.3% and an adjusted 2.7% from the same period a year earlier.