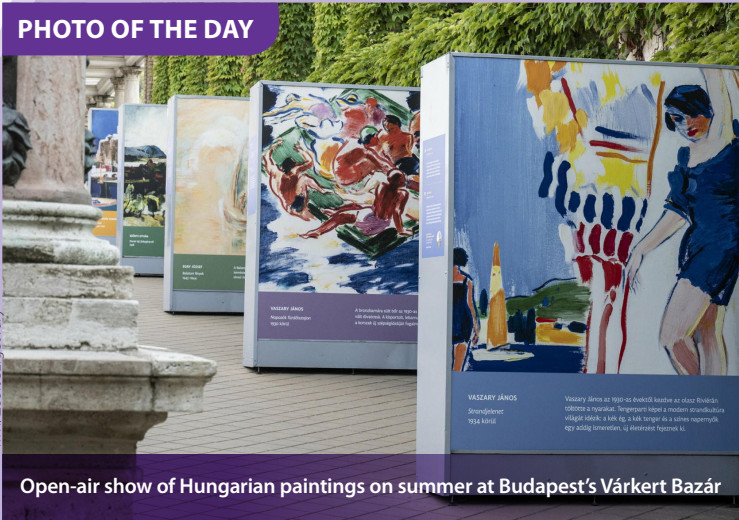


PHOTO OF THE DAY



Open-air show of Hungarian paintings on summer at Budapest's Várkert Bazár

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events of the Hungarian EU presidency

Events related to the war in Ukraine

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: PATRIOTS MADE 'BIG GAINS' IN ELECTION

Ursula von der Leyen, the newly re-elected EC President, "is our employee, not our opponent", as opposed to the "pro-war prime ministers with flawed stances from Europe's point of view", Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said on Friday.

Orbán said patriotic forces "made big gains but not a breakthrough" in the European parliamentary elections in June. Orbán said von der Leyen's performance had been very weak in the past five years. Europe has failed on the matter of the green transition and if things go on like this, Europe's industry will be destroyed, the prime minister told public radio. On the issue of war, Orbán said Europe was focusing on participation on the Ukrainian side rather than on peace. Von der Leyen "is not our political opponent but our employee", her job as EC president is to execute the guidelines determined by the member states' prime ministers, he said. "Ursula von der Leyen is paid from EU coffers, so she is dependent [on the EU]; she must do what the prime ministers say."

The true weight of European politics lies with the European Council, he said. "The problem is not what the commission head did or did not do but what the prime ministers let her do or leave undone." Orbán said he had not supported von der Leyen's re-election because he had deemed her performance weak in light of the guidelines issued by the European Council.

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ORBÁN: NATL ELECTIONS COULD USHER IN 'NEXT STAGE OF CHANGE'

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said “the next stage of change” in the European Union was expected at national elections. Austria is holding one later this year and “many governments are teetering” in Europe, raising the possibility of early elections, and Germany will hold regional elections, he told public radio. “I hope that the mix of prime ministers will change and we will be able to give better instructions, as well as get better at holding [EC President von der Leyen] to account,” he said. “One shouldn’t see one’s own employee as an opponent,” he said. At the same time, prime ministers “representing flawed stances ... and party leaders working against Hungary in the EP should be considered opponents, like [European People’s Party leader] Manfred Weber, who is known to hate Hungarians and promote war and migration,” Orbán said.

The Patriots for Europe party family is now the third largest force in the EP, Orbán said, adding it would be the second largest once it had forged alliances. He said he hoped patriotic forces would achieve a breakthrough at upcoming elections in Austria and other countries, “which will be complemented by the US presidential election”. “Patriots will be in the majority in the world by the end of the year,” he said.

Meanwhile, Orbán said it was “a problem” that European leaders were not doing what the people wanted them to. “People across Europe all want peace instead of war, but the left is pro-war,” the prime minister said. “People want migration to be stopped, but the left is pro-migration. The people don’t want ... a family bond that is important to them -- which organises life around a man, a woman and raising children -- to be mocked with all kinds of other forms of cohabitation being raised to the same level, let’s call it gender, but the left is pro-gender.” Orbán said people wanted national sovereignty and national pride, which the left had never wanted and even considered “dangerous”. He said there was a clear right-wing programme and vision offered by the newly-established political group of patriots which envisioned and was working for a “family-friendly, anti-migration and pro-peace Europe of nations led by proud patriots”.

ORBÁN: HUNGARY TO DRAFT EU COMPETITIVENESS PACT

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in an interview on public radio that improving European competitiveness is a central topic of Hungary’s presidency of the Council of the European Union. Hungary will put forward a competitiveness pact at the European Council meeting in Budapest on Nov 8, which it has

already discussed with France, Italy and Germany, Orbán said.

“Competitiveness is important, it’s about how we live: if we’re competitive we’re well off, if we’re not competitive then we’re badly off,” he said. The matter is closely connected to the war, he said. “Improving competitiveness is extremely difficult as long as enormous amounts of money flow into funding the war in Ukraine.” Orbán said the funding for Ukraine had well exceeded 100 billion forints (EUR 256m), “syphoning funding from European farmers, e-transition and road, bridge and railway development”. Therefore, standing up for peace is equivalent to standing up and working for Hungary, he said.

In a time of peace, Hungary would immediately find itself in another economic situation, and more possibilities could be opened up for people, he said. As long as the war is on, Hungary’s budget must remain a “war budget”. “Once we can broker peace, we can move on to a peacetime budget.” The main points of a 2025 budget designed for peacetime, which would double this year’s economic growth, “is already waiting in a desk drawer”, Orbán said. “That is how big of a difference peace or war makes.”

ORBÁN: 'PEACE MISSION' KEY TO AVOIDING ESCALATION

Concerning his peace mission, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said von der Leyen and European liberals were

“naive people”, so they could not be accused of war profiteering. “I’m not accusing either von der Leyen or the pro-war European leaders of being in the back pocket of George Soros-type dollar speculators,” he said. “It’s more that they think they can establish peace by getting the warring sides to see reason ... and they expect a peace mission to get the warring sides to stop firing at each other the next day.” Orbán said this was a “misunderstanding” as demonstrated by the strike on a children’s hospital in Kyiv. He said a peace mission was necessary because if there wasn’t one, the war would keep escalating and those living in the warzone would suffer increasingly severe losses. The prime minister noted that he had spoken with both sides and had prepared a report on his talks which said that the sides did not want peace.

Orbán said neither side would see on their own that peace was better than war because they believed that they could win and continuing the war was advantageous to them. “War is a question of strength, and if the two sides don’t want peace then we must ask whether the major global power centres are willing to take action in the interest of peace,” he said. Orbán said these three power centres were China, the United States and the EU. “If these three power centres speak the same language and reach an agreement with each other on the need for peace, then we can get the warring sides to sit down and agree on a ceasefire,” Orbán said. He said China

was pro-peace and the US would be as well “once President Trump comes [into office]”, with the EU being the last remaining power centre needed to get the warring parties to the negotiating table.

Orbán said the essence of the peace mission was resilience. “I’m talking to someone every day about some kind of possibility, detail and new initiatives,” he said. He added that he always informed the public about his talks afterwards because “the peace mission has a lot of opponents, so if the next step is known ahead of time, many will be making efforts to make sure it doesn’t happen”. He said those in Europe had “dug themselves deep into the trenches”, and it was “hard to climb out of there” and pursue a policy of peace. He added, however, that he believed there would be a shift in Europe as well that would come on the day of the US presidential election at the latest, “but it would be better if this wasn’t a turnaround made in panic but rather a well-thought-out process”.

Concerning the assassination attempt against former US President Donald Trump, Orbán said the number of “spectacular assassination attempts that grab the world’s attention is rising, and all of them are being committed against anti-war pro-peace politicians”. He said the “pro-war forces” were “so tense ... and organised” that they were trying to eliminate “pro-peace forces”.

He noted that he had met Trump two days before the assassination attempt, with their talks lasting over two hours. The Republican

presidential nominee, he added, “is in good shape and ready to fight”, and “this was probably clear in the way he survived the assassination attempt”. “Thank God he didn’t let himself get killed,” Orbán said, adding he hoped this meant that God had plans for the former president. “And what else could God’s plan be in this time of war than for someone to finally bring peace?” Orbán said he and Trump had also spoken about economic issues, and Trump’s programme contained points he would “happily” adopt to Hungary as early as next year. He said Trump’s proposal to make tips tax-exempt was “remarkable”, adding he saw no reason to tax tips in Hungary, either. Hungary “is constantly getting ideas” from Trump’s economic programme, which were all subject of the discussion between them, he said.

As regards a child abuse incident caught on camera at an adventure park in Szolnok, in central Hungary, Orbán said the case was “unacceptable, unbearable and cries for consequences”. Referring to a police investigation of a report filed by park personnel who said an adult accompanying a group of children to the park had kicked one of the children, Orbán said the organisers of summer camps were responsible for the children parents placed into their care. “They have pledged to take care of them and to make sure they spend their time meaningfully,” he added. “It is the government’s job to say that those who can’t live up to that responsibility -- and they clearly



couldn't in this case -- should not be allowed to organise camps ... that must be enforced," he said. Summer camps cannot have adults abusing children, he said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: LEBANON KEY TO MIDDLE EAST STABILITY

Lebanon is key to maintaining stability and avoiding escalation in the Middle East, and the EU and the international community should do everything in their power to keep it out of the war, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said after meeting with his Lebanese counterpart, Abdallah Bou Habib, in Budapest on Friday. The war in Ukraine and the danger of the Middle Eastern conflict spreading to other countries are presenting grave challenges to Europe, Péter Szijjártó told a joint press conference. "We know perfectly well that if the security crisis in the Middle East spreads to one more country, it won't stop at its borders but widen into a regional or even greater war," he said. That would put Europe in a dire security situation, "those still hanging on to the reins would then lose all control," he said.

Lebanon is a key ally in that fight, and Hungary is urging the EU to pay the 15 million euros earmarked for the country in the European Peace Facility. "We would finally spend the Peace Facility on peace," Szijjártó said. He said he hoped that all parties would now adhere to bilateral and international decisions. The 180,000

internally displaced people in southern Lebanon and northern Israel should be enabled to return home as soon as possible, he said.

Lebanon's stability is also key to containing illegal migration, as it is currently housing more than 1.5 million refugees, he said. "Should Lebanon not take care of those people ... they would almost certainly leave for Europe. And we all know the effect they would have on Europe's stability and future." The world had left Lebanon to its own devices in dealing with the problem, which was "not fair", he said, calling on the international community to ensure that those refugees return to Syria, certain areas of which had become much safer in recent years.

"We are calling for the EU to give up this section of its failed foreign policy. I have been a foreign minister for ten years, I have listened to various foreign ministers and high representatives ... saying we should not contact the Syrian government or President Bashar al-Assad". "In the past ten years, I have been the only one to stay [in power] in Europe, and President Assad is also there. So maybe we should review the strategy and start providing economic aid rather than setting conditions, so that security can be restored and refugees sent back to Syria," he said. Should the problem go unsolved, Lebanon's stability would be at risk "and Europe would sooner or later have to pay the price", he said. Hungary will continue to maintain a contingent of 16 troops in the UN mission on the Israel-Lebanon border, he added.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: EU FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF'S 'MANOEUVRING' AGAINST HUNGARY PRESIDENCY PROGRAMMES 'PITIFUL'

EU foreign and security policy chief Josep Borrell's "manoeuvring" to "undermine" the planned programmes of the Hungarian EU presidency is "regrettable", Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Budapest on Friday. Answering questions from journalists, Szijjártó said he had not received a letter from Borrell inviting him to a Foreign Affairs Council meeting on Aug 28-29, the same dates for which the Hungarian presidency has scheduled an informal meeting in Budapest. "I heard that the high representative tried to do some manoeuvring," Szijjártó said. "I'm not surprised, I followed his career as high representative over the last five years which was one of the most unsuccessful period of European foreign policy. And if he had sent such a letter, I would have probably sent him back a sandbox shovel, because this whole 'I'm gathering all my friends together or you are' is at the maturity level of a kindergartener". "So for my part, I am, of course, looking forward to the meeting with my fellow foreign ministers at Gymnich with pleasure," Szijjártó said. "If the meeting is held elsewhere then it'll be held elsewhere." He said the EU today had "much bigger problems" to deal with, calling it "more regrettable than outrageous"

that this was the foreign policy chief's top priority when there was a war happening on the continent and the bloc's competitiveness and weight in foreign policy had "taken a dramatic hit".

Asked about the possibility of increased American participation in the upgrade of Hungary's Paks nuclear power plant, Szijjártó said it was up to Rosatom, the Russian main contractor on the project, to select its sub-contractors, and there already are American, French and German partners working on the project, with their participation worth hundreds of millions or even a billion euros. He said the fact that US-Russian trade turnover in May was up 50% compared with April was proof of "this sort of Russian-American cooperation". "And one of the biggest contributing factors to this is the deliveries of Russian uranium to the United States," he added.

"So if Russia is the US' top uranium supplier then I don't see what the outrage is about," Szijjártó said. "And, of course, we can say that it'll be banned from August or from January, but the war has been going on for two and a half years now. We've been hearing for two and a half years now that we're feeding the Russian war machine by

buying natural gas and oil from Russia. So then what were the US uranium imports over the last two and a half years?"

Commenting on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's recent remarks, Szijjártó said thousands were dying each day in Hungary's neighbouring country, tens of thousands were fleeing, and border guards were having to hold back those trying to leave the country. "We can all see the videos of the way the Ukrainians are conscripting people," he said. "It's very interesting that the West isn't outraged by this and that NGOs aren't making an issue out of it. It's very interesting that those who usually talk about human rights are silent right now". "And then here we are, the ones who are willing and brave enough to talk about the need to make peace, and then Ukraine's president talks about the Hungarian prime minister in such an appalling way," he said. "I have a very hard time accepting and processing this and stopping myself from using coarse expressions," the minister said. "But we're going to continue this peace mission, because if there won't be peace soon ... even more brutal

things can happen on the frontline, the threat of escalation will be even higher than before ... and there'll be a threat of all of Europe going up in flames."

GLOBAL IT GLITCH CAUSING DELAYS AT BUDAPEST AIRPORT

Several airlines' passenger check-in systems at Budapest's Liszt Ferenc International Airport have been hit by a global IT outage, causing flight delays and longer wait times, operator Budapest Airport said on Friday. International news agencies say a global IT glitch is causing disruptions to the systems of airports, airlines, rail companies and banks, including all airports in Spain, the airports in Berlin and Amsterdam, the leading British train company, Sky Television as well as several Australian and New Zealand companies. At Liszt Ferenc International, the problem is affecting Eurowings, Ryanair, Turkish Airlines and Wizz Air flights, Budapest Airport said, adding that several airlines have switched to manual passenger check-in. The operator said it is keeping passengers updated by intercom announcements.