

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTVA/Marton Mónus

Sausage dog escorts the voter in Hungary's local election

UPCOMING EVENTS

Reactions to local election results

EU foreign ministers meet in Luxembourg

Stats office releases industrial output figures for August in 2nd reading

TOP STORY

KARÁCSONY HAILS 'HISTORIC VICTORY'

A historic victory has taken place in Budapest, Gergely Karácsony said after winning the Budapest municipal election amid high turnout. Viktor Orbán said the results in the country showed that the ruling Fidesz-KDNP alliance was still Hungary's strongest force.

István Tarlós, the outgoing Budapest mayor, congratulated Karácsony, the joint opposition candidate, who won 50.62% of the vote with over 90% of the votes counted. "This victory is about a green and free Budapest," Karácsony said, adding that October 14 would mark "the start of a new era for Hungary in its quest to regain its freedom". Karácsony pledged to put relations between the capital and the government on a new footing. He added that he would not be preparing for war but for even-handed cooperation with the Hungarian government.

Orbán said the election campaign had been "a tough, big and open political battle" as should be the case in a democracy based on a competition between parties. He said that for the past nine years, the force representing the governing majority had taken the helm of Budapest. "But today residents of the capital have decided that something else comes next," he added. "We'll take this into consideration and, in the interests of the country and the people who live in Budapest, we are ready to work together," Orbán said.

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FIDESZ GETS MOST VOTES NATIONWIDE

Hungary's ruling Fidesz party has received the highest number of votes nationwide in Sunday's local elections, Péter Szijjártó, the foreign minister, told MTI. He said the win would provide "an important resource" for waging the upcoming "big international battles". Szijjártó thanked the Hungarian people who participated in the ballot, saying the high turnout was important. "In a democracy it's always good news when people think that voting is important and counts when it comes to decision-making," he said, adding "special thanks to those who voted for us". The minister said that it appeared Fidesz had received the most votes in the country, adding that this was "a big thing, as this is now Hungary's tenth election since autumn 2006 that we have won".

Ruling Fidesz's László Papp attributed his re-election as the mayor of eastern Hungary's Debrecen to "the serious, diligent work carried out over the past five years". "Another breakthrough victory has been achieved," the mayor of Hungary's second biggest city said, noting that Fidesz's candidates had also won in all of the city's individual electoral districts. He named economic growth and the maintenance of the influx of young people as his main goals for the next five years. Papp had captured 61.84% of the vote with 97.08% of the votes counted.

Pál Veres, the newly elected opposition mayor of north-eastern Hungary's Miskolc, vowed to work together with "everyone who represents the interests of the city". "Miskolc has won," Veres, who won 55% of the vote in Hungary's fourth largest city, declared in his victory speech. He said his campaign had been honest and committed to "working with all of Miskolc's residents".

László Botka, re-elected for the fifth time as the mayor of the city of Szeged in Sunday's local elections -- this time as a joint opposition candidate -- said the community of the southern Hungarian city, the country's third biggest, were the real winners. Everyone should feel at home in the city, the Socialist politician added.

Attila Péterffy, the newly elected opposition mayor of the southern Hungarian city of Pécs, said that with an opposition majority in the city council, the city would be put on a path of development. Péterffy, who was elected mayor of Hungary's 5th largest city with the backing of the opposition Democratic Coalition, Socialist Party, Jobbik and the Momentum Movement, thanked the voters who had expressed a desire for change. He said one of his first acts as mayor would be to investigate the debt amassed by the local council in recent years. Péterffy had captured 53.11% of the vote with 92.14% of the votes counted.

The incumbent mayor of Győr, Zsolt Borkai, who was at the centre of a scandal leading up to the election,

narrowly regained the mayoralty of the western Hungarian city.

Meanwhile, anti-government maverick Péter Márki-Zay was re-elected as the mayor of Hódmezővásárhely.

Jobbik MP György Szilágyi said the partial results of the local elections suggested that ruling Fidesz's rule over the country "appears to be waning" and the opposition can now start "dismantling the semi-dictatorial regime" in favour of building a "free and democratic country". He said the reason why his party had allowed its organisations to join forces with the other opposition parties was because they had listened to the people "who want to dismantle the System of National Cooperation".

He welcomed the partial results which showed Jobbik MP Tamás Pintér winning the mayoral election in central Hungary's Dunaújváros. Szilágyi accused Fidesz of committing "acts of electoral fraud as it has done in past elections".

Leader of the Socialist Party Bertalan Tóth said after partial results were published that "the opposition's strategy has worked" and that opposition had made a breakthrough. He said the opposition parties had been proven right to embark on an alliance in Budapest, in the capital's districts and cities with county rights, as well as in some other localities. Tóth said he was proud that the Socialists had launched an opposition primary in Budapest. The outcome, he added, was that the opposition was set to

take the helm of Budapest. Meanwhile, the Socialist leader said the scandal in the western Hungarian city of Győr had blown wide open what had previously only been whispered in localities, namely that it was a tentacle of an "octopus of corruption" all over localities controlled by the ruling Fidesz party. This, he insisted, had also influenced the election result.

ORBÁN: FIDESZ-KDNP STILL HUNGARY'S STRONGEST FORCE

The results of Sunday's local elections show that the ruling Fidesz alliance with the Christian Democrats is still Hungary's strongest force, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told supporters at Fidesz's campaign HQ. Orbán said the election campaign had been "a tough, big and open political battle" as should be the case in a democracy based on a competition between parties. He said that for the past nine years, the force representing the governing majority had taken the helm of Budapest. "But today residents of the capital have decided that something else comes next," he said. "We'll take this into consideration and, in the interests of the country and the people who live in Budapest, are ready to work together."

Orbán thanked voters in rural Hungary for putting their trust in the ruling party. "They can count on us in the future, too." The PM thanked all Hungarian voters who cast their ballots and congratulated the winners.

He paid special thanks to Fidesz-KDNP mayors, "many of whom have earned trust thanks to their hard work over many years." Orbán said that true to form, the local election result suggested that Fidesz's showing of over 50% was "by now becoming a standard" that could still be achieved.

Orbán thanked the outgoing mayor, István Tarlós, for his work over the past nine years. "We won't forget that it was he who dragged the city out of bankruptcy."

Referring to cities with county rights, he said 13 out of 23 were still in the Fidesz-KDNP column and Fidesz won all 19 counties. Orbán added that 147 Fidesz-KDNP mayors will lead localities with more than 5,000 inhabitants -- more than half of such localities. The prime minister said the Fidesz-KDNP alliance was still Hungary's strongest political force. "We'll act accordingly," he added. "For us, Hungary will continue to come first." Orbán said: "We'll assess and analyse the results" and will shape Fidesz-KDNP policy accordingly.

Meanwhile, commenting on Sunday's general election in Poland, Orbán said it was important for Hungary that the ruling party in Poland had won the national ballot.

KARÁCSONY HAILS 'HISTORIC VICTORY' IN BUDAPEST

A historic victory has taken place in Budapest, Gergely Karácsony said after winning the Budapest municipal

election on Sunday. "This victory is about a green and free Budapest," the joint opposition candidate for the capital's mayor said late on Sunday. "This victory was about how the power of the people is stronger than people in power, love and cooperation always overcomes hatred, and reality in the end trumps lies," he said, adding that October 14 would mark the start of a new era for Hungary in its quest to regain its freedom. He said the victory was not his or the opposition parties' but that of Budapesters who were fighting to win back the capital. "Starting tomorrow, Budapest will be a home to us all and I will also represent those who didn't vote for me," he said, thanking the politicians, activists and voters who supported him.

Karácsony said he had thanked outgoing mayor István Tarlós for his work in office to date. He pledged to put relations between the capital and the government on a new footing. He added that he would not be preparing for war but for even-handed cooperation with the Hungarian government. Karácsony said that during the campaign, his team had involved Budapest residents in its decisions, while the opposition parties had understood that they would only be successful if they looked to each other and people who wanted change as allies. "The campaign is over and now it's time to get to work," he said, adding that his job would be to bring peace to "the upset capital" and the "country filled with tension and hatred".

Tarlós, who was greeted with a standing ovation at Fidesz’s election headquarters on the banks of the Danube, thanked the “entire community” of Budapesters who had voted for him, as well as the capital and its third district for the years he had served as their mayor. “At a national level, the result is nice, but we need to pause to think about Budapest,” he said. “There’s nothing to say; this is how Budapest voted today,” Tarlós said. “The capital elected Gergely Karácsony and from midnight he’ll be Budapest’s mayor.”

“Thank you for the opportunity to be among you,” the outgoing mayor said, adding that he would “not forget” the 29-30 years he had spent as part of Budapest’s leadership. “At 70 years of age, these things happen, but it’ll get better,” Tarlós concluded.

ORBÁN IN PARIS URGES UNITY BETWEEN EASTERN, WESTERN EU MEMBER STATES

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán called for unity and cooperation between the eastern and western member states of the European Union ahead of a working lunch with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris on Friday. At a joint press conference with Macron in the garden of the Élysée Palace, Orbán said Hungary and France were both interested in a successful and economically strong Europe. The prime minister noted that France and the central European

member states held similar positions on security, border protection and the need for a joint European military. Orbán said he will also explain to Macron why Hungary and France hold such differing views on the issue of migration. He underscored the differences between Hungary and France’s civilisational traditions, saying that the two countries had different ways of contributing to Europe’s security through the means of solidarity.

On another subject, Orbán said that in order to improve Europe’s security, the bloc must “move its gates” further down to the south and find a form of enlargement that best serves this goal.

As regards climate policy, the prime minister called Hungary a “climate champion”, arguing that it was among the one-third of EU member states with the lowest CO2 emissions and was ready to continue pursuing its goals in this area. He emphasised, however, the need to find the right balance and harmony between competitiveness and the fight against climate change. Concerning bilateral ties, Orbán said economic relations between the two countries were “excellent”. France is the fourth largest investor in Hungary, with 670 companies employing some 40,000 people, he said. Orbán expressed hope that French investors would continue to pursue their activities in Hungary. Orbán also said that Macron was “highly respected” in Hungary because he was a leader who had “brought back the intellectual strength of debates about visions

into European politics and we greatly appreciate this”. “We hope that Europe can regain its imagination,” he added.

Macron said the difference in his and Orbán’s stance on migration policy, climate change and protection and the EU budget is well-known. The French president, however, expressed the conviction that a consensus could be found on those matters over the next months under the auspices of the new European Commission. Macron called it essential to have a strong European Commission capable of presenting ambitious plans.

“I will keep working on this with Prime Minister Orbán and the Visegrad Four,” he said.

OPPOSITION STAGES DEMONSTRATION IN GYŐR

Parties of the opposition staged a demonstration in Győr, in western Hungary, on Saturday afternoon, against incumbent mayor Zsolt Borkai, who has recently appeared in video footage in connection with acts of sexual impropriety. Speakers at the event said that the mayor had damaged the city’s reputation. András Fekete-Győr, head of the Momentum Movement, said that the country was run by a “mafia government” while ruling Fidesz was characterised by “emptiness and a lack of values” in which party Borkai’s behaviour was “more of a norm rather than a mistake”. He insisted that Győr’s citizens deserve “an honest local council without scandals or corruption”.

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György Szilágyi, an MP of conservative Jobbik, voiced his party's support of the opposition parties' cooperating before the upcoming municipal elections despite four other Jobbik MP's quitting that cooperation on October 8, and said that those MPs had "smeared Jobbik's name". He added that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán should have called on Borkai to resign when the footage came to light. Local Socialist leader Balázs Prollreisz said that Borkai was unworthy of his post and added that "tomorrow will see a fight between the honest and those dishonest". Sándor Rónai, MEP of the Democratic Coalition, said that "Borkai will no longer be mayor, even if he should win Sunday's election", and added that "his successor will be appointed by the prime minister".

ÁDER DISCUSSES COHESION FUNDS, GERMAN INVESTMENTS WITH STEINMEIER

Cohesion funds in the next EU budgetary period and German investments in Hungary were in focus at talks the Hungarian president held with his German counterpart in Athens on Saturday. János Áder met Frank-Walter Steinmeier after a meeting of the Arraiolos group. Speaking to public media after their talks, Áder said they were in agreement that the EU's cohesion funds should continue to serve their original purpose of developing disadvantaged regions. There are 20 such regions in the whole of the EU, four of them in Hungary, Áder

said. "Therefore we cannot give up on receiving from EU development funds," he added. The proposals on funding in the next EU budgetary cycle would affect most unfavourably the least developed member states and regions and cannot therefore be considered fair, Áder said. The Friends of Cohesion group, formed by 14 EU countries, will seek to change the current financial proposals at every forum, he said. He said that at their talks German investments in Hungary were also discussed. German companies prefer to invest in Hungary because they consider it to be a predictable country in terms of economic regulations, Áder said. "The German intention and objective is clear: maintaining this process in the coming years," the Hungarian president said.