

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Coronavirus updates**

**EU defence ministers meet in Brest**

**Stats office second estimate for industry in Nov**

## TOP STORY

# PRESIDENT SETS APRIL 3 ELECTION DAY

President János Áder has set April 3 as the date of Hungary's next general election, the earliest possible Sunday that the ballot can be held under the law.

"This year, for the ninth time, Hungarian citizens with voting rights will be free to decide whom they will entrust with the management of our common affairs," Áder said in a statement released by his office. "Hungary's Fundamental Law and the Electoral Procedure Act contain clear provisions on the date by which the President of the Republic may set a general election of members of parliament," he said. "Based on this statutory mandate, I have set the date of the general election of members of parliament for April 3, 2022, the earliest possible date."

The election campaign officially starts 50 days before the date of the ballot -- on February 12 this time round. Hungary's 7.8 million voters will have the opportunity to cast two ballots in the single-round election deciding 199 seats.

One ballot directly elects lawmakers in 106 individual constituencies. A formula is used to allocate the remaining seats based on votes cast for a party list. Prospective candidates must secure 500 signatures by February 25 to run in an individual constituency.

**PRESIDENT SETS APRIL 3 AS DATE FOR NATIONAL REFERENDUM ON CHILD PROTECTION LAW**

President János Áder has set the date for the government-initiated referendum on Hungary's child protection law for April 3. Hungary's parliament last November voted to hold a referendum concerning Hungary's child protection law. The motion was passed by pro-government lawmakers and several independents, while the opposition boycotted the vote. The public will be asked the following questions in the plebiscite:

Do you support children in public schools participating in classes demonstrating sexual orientations without parental consent?

Do you support information about gender change treatments being given to children?

Do you support media content of a sexual nature and affecting the development of children being presented to them without any restrictions?

Do you support media content presenting gender change being presented to children?

In a statement released by his office, Áder said the deadlines set by the laws on electoral and referendum procedures, a referendum on the four questions and the general election could only be held simultaneously on April 3 or April 10. "In view of this, I have

set the referendum on the four issues specified in Parliamentary Resolution 32/2021 of November 30 for April 3, 2022," the president said.

**ÁDER: INTL DIALOGUE CANNOT BE BUILT ON LIES, DENIAL OF TRUTH**

International relations and dialogue cannot be built either on lies or the denial of truth, President János Áder said at a New Year's reception to members of the diplomatic corps in Budapest on Monday evening. Áder told the event at the Palace of Arts that during his term in office he had represented values that were important to him as a Hungarian citizen, as someone who thinks of future generations, as a father and a grandfather. The president thanked the diplomats and the countries they represent for their partnership "in countless areas" such as when it came to accepting, declaring and representing truth. Áder noted that in 2013 he and his Serbian counterpart had paid tribute to the Hungarian and Serbian victims of the second world war, apologised for the crimes committed against each other's peoples and vowed to make peace and move on from the past. The president also noted that last year he and his Slovak counterpart had inaugurated the restored Ferenc Rákóczi II castle in Borsi, in southeast Slovakia, and agreed that Hungary and Slovakia's shared heritage connected the two countries.

Áder also highlighted the 60th anniversary of the Holocaust when he declared in Budapest, at the former concentration camp of Mauthausen in Austria, in Auschwitz and Jerusalem that discrimination based on any ground such as religion or ethnic origin was unacceptable. He also highlighted his addresses to the United Nations' climate summits, his role in mobilising countries to set more ambitious climate protection goals and his work in the Presidential Water Council. Áder said that during his presidency he had pushed to ensure that environmental protection was "not just a PR stunt, but the cornerstone of our mindset and actions".

Áder added that during his visits abroad he had highlighted innovative Hungarian technologies, which he said served not only Hungarian economic interests but also a greener future. When visiting Hungarian communities across the world, Áder said he had always highlighted that ethnic Hungarians were an asset to bilateral ties. Referring to his visits to Hungarian troops in foreign missions, he said that Hungary was a reliable and faithful partner in peacekeeping efforts. The president said those encounters had cemented his faith that cooperation could be "more than a symbolic gesture, a carefully worded statement, or paragraphs in coldly polite protocol agreement". Cooperation could mean a lot more; it could be "braver, more active, and more efficient", he said.



Concluding his speech, Áder quoted Robert Schuman as saying that global peace cannot be ensured unless creative efforts are made against the forces jeopardising it, and wished “a will to build peace, strength and health to cope with difficulties, to reject lies and accept truth, and creative efforts matching the perils” to participants.

### **SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY BACKS EFFORTS TO RESTORE PEACE, ORDER IN KAZAKHSTAN**

Hungary’s government supports efforts to restore peace and order in Kazakhstan, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Tuesday, adding that stability in Central Asia was in Hungary’s interest.

The past several years have shown that the situation of the Central Asian region has a fundamental impact on the security of Europe and specifically central Europe, the foreign ministry cited Szijjártó as saying in a video call with the foreign ministers of the Organization of Turkic States, in which Hungary has observer status. “Our interests lie in a peaceful and stable Central Asia,” Szijjártó said. “Attempts at destabilisation and coups run completely counter to our security interests, since they end up making more room for acts of terror and the spread of radical and extremist ideologies, which tends to lead to the emergence of large migration waves from various regions.” Szijjártó said the members of the Organization of Turkic States passed a joint declaration

at their virtual meeting in which they condemned “violence and vandalism” in Kazakhstan, expressed their solidarity with the Kazakh people as well as their sympathies over the death toll in the wake of the upheaval in the country. As regards the violent protests, Szijjártó said: “We know very well from experience what tends to happen in these instances on the international political scene. We usually see so-called human rights groups and certain countries wanting to level criticism and approve declarations condemning the situation.”

“But there’s no place for those this time,” the minister said, adding that the international community should instead work to prevent a repeat of “similar worrying and violent developments”. Those responsible for any form of violence must not be absolved and terrorist groups and organisations spreading extremist ideology must not be given space to operate, he added.

Meanwhile, Szijjártó said the recent developments in Kazakhstan had also demonstrated the importance of economic development schemes in the region, arguing that it was economic progress that provided the foundations of stability and peace. Hungary’s government therefore supports the creation of a Turkic investment fund, which could help launch further investment projects in Central Asia, he said. Szijjártó also said that a military plane carrying Hungarian citizens evacuated from Kazakhstan landed in Kecskemét, in central Hungary, on Monday night.

### **DEUTSCH RE-ELECTED HEAD OF FIDESZ EP DELEGATION**

The delegation of Hungary’s ruling Fidesz in the European Parliament has re-elected Tamás Deutsch as its head and Kinga Gál as chairwoman for the next two and a half years. The delegation said in a statement on Tuesday that Deutsch has been serving in the post since July 2019. A founding member of Fidesz, he has been an MEP for the party since 2009. Gál has been the delegation’s chair since January last year. She has been serving as an MEP since 2004 and Fidesz’s deputy leader since November 2021, the statement said.

### **CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER ADVOCATES BOOSTER JOB**

The chief medical officer has strongly recommended that everyone should receive a third, booster jab against Covid, and argued that protection would decrease 3-4 months after the second shot. The jabs are available at vaccination points and from general practitioners, Cecília Müller told a press conference on Tuesday, adding that residents could choose from five kinds of “effective and safe” vaccines. Müller welcomed the results of recent vaccination campaigns, in which people could receive the jab without prior registration, and said that some 300,000 people received their first shots through the programme. She said that the aim was to ensure that

anyone could get the vaccine “without technical or physical restrictions”.

She also said that the highly infectious Omicron variant currently accounted for 29% of new infections in Hungary. She said that Omicron caused milder symptoms in general, but warned that “it may not be true in the case of individuals; the gravity of symptoms depends on one’s state of health and their level of vaccination”. Concerning vaccination of the 5-11 age group, Müller said that the dates originally offered had all been reserved, but a further opportunity would open for them to get the shots on Saturdays. Müller said that the number of cases “with flu-like symptoms” was low, adding that it was likely that, similarly to last year, there would be no flu epidemic. She noted, however, that flu numbers usually peaked in late January or early February.

### **HUNGARY RECORDS 69 COVID DEATHS, 3,382 NEW INFECTIONS**

Altogether 69 patients died of a Covid-related illness during the past 24 hours, while 3,382 new coronavirus infections were registered, [koronavirus.gov.hu](http://koronavirus.gov.hu) said on Tuesday. So far 6,294,707 people have received a first jab, while 6,033,675 have been fully vaccinated. Fully 3,292,175 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections has risen to 113,160, while hospitals are treating 2,932 Covid-19 patients, 274 of whom are

intubated on a ventilator. Since the first outbreak, 1,300,994 have been registered with the virus, while 40,016 deaths have been recorded. Fully 1,147,818 people have made a recovery.

### **GOVT EARMARKS HUF 930 M FOR PROMOTING HUNGARICUMS**

Hungary’s government will this year again spend 930 million forints (EUR 2.6m) on promoting Hungaricum, products unique to Hungary, the agriculture minister said on Tuesday. The government’s expansion of its scheme to promote and preserve Hungaricums to the entirety of the Carpathian Basin serves as a means to unite the nation, István Nagy told a press conference. The programme has so far registered 82 Hungaricums, 138 “exceptional national values”, over 1,100 local and regional collections of values, some 10,000 local values, 19 county collections of values and close to 2,000 county values, the minister said.

### **EBRD SUPPORTS SOLUS COPPER FOIL PLANT IN HUNGARY**

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) on Monday announced a 28 million dollar loan for the construction of a plant by South Korea’s Solus Advanced Materials that will make copper foil for electric vehicle batteries. The plant, in Tatabánya, in northwest Hungary, will be the first of its kind in Europe, the

EBRD said. It will support the move to electro-mobility and advance the European Union toward its goal of achieving a climate-neutral economy, while contributing to the circular economy as it relies fully on scrap copper for its feedstock, the EBRD said. “We fully support Solus Advanced Materials’ growth and its contribution to Hungary’s becoming a hub for the European EV battery industry,” EBRD Head of Industries Frederic Lucenet said.

To date, the EBRD has invested almost 3.3 billion euros in 192 projects in Hungary.

### **BUDGET DEFICIT REACHES HUF 5,101.5 BN FOR 2021**

Hungary’s cash flow-based budget deficit, excluding local councils, reached 5,101.5 billion forints (EUR 14.2bn) at the end of December, the finance ministry said in a preliminary reading of data released on Tuesday. “The budget ensured, to the full extent, the resources necessary to restart the economy and the defence against the pandemic,” the ministry said. “In the interest of restarting the economy, the government continued its economic policy based of tax reductions, job creation and the strengthening of families in 2021. As a result, the economy may have grown by 6.4%, while the number of employed rose to 4.7 million and the jobless rate fell under 4%. Additionally, resources used for family subsidies and for the defence of pensioners increased further,” the statement said.

The deficit climbed by 1,170.2 billion forints from the previous month. The central budget deficit reached 4,662.3 billion forints at the end of December, the social insurance funds were 419.4 billion forints in the red and separate state funds also showed a gap of 19.8 billion.

**KSH: GUEST NIGHTS JUMP  
292.1% IN NOV**

Guest nights at commercial accommodations in Hungary rose by an annual 292.1 % to 1,266,000 in November from a low base impacted by travel restrictions during the third wave of the coronavirus pandemic, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Tuesday. The number of guest nights spent by domestic travellers increased by 163.0 % to 644,000. The number spent by foreign visitors jumped by 697.2 % to 622,000. The number of guest nights in Budapest rose by 621.1 % to 469,000 in November. KSH noted that the number of guest nights was down by 39.4 % from

the same month in 2019, before the pandemic. Revenues of commercial accommodations grew by 333.9 % to 28.226 billion forints (EUR 78.7m).

**14TH INTL CIRCUS  
FESTIVAL TO FEATURE A  
HUNDRED ARTISTS FROM  
FOUR CONTINENTS**

The 14th International Circus Festival that began in Budapest on Tuesday will feature around a hundred artists from four continents until January 17, Péter Fekete, the state secretary for culture, said at the event’s opening. The festival opened with the first ever international academic conference entitled Circus Buildings in Europe which focuses on the establishment, survival, transformation, functional change, destruction and renewal of European circus buildings. At the conference, French, British, Bulgarian, Monegasque, Canadian and Hungarian experts review every major circus building, still operating or demolished, in Europe, explore the history of

the Capital Circus of Budapest and discuss new architectural trends and technologies, Fekete said. “The circus has over the past centuries evolved from a form of entertainment into a profession of art while preserving its traditions. But in order to be able to complete this mission, circuses need a space, a solid building to present their performance, many of which do not exist in Europe anymore. What would be highly welcome is to have those temples of culture be built back up again,” said Fekete.

Alain Frère, the founder and artistic director of the Monte-Carlo International Circus Festival, welcomed the Budapest festival as an opportunity for representatives of the world’s circuses to meet. On January 12 the festival will feature a Red Carpet Show, a parade of participating artists beginning at 5pm in the square in front of the Capital Circus in City Park. The Newcomer Show presenting young Hungarian artist talents will take place on Friday and the festival will close with a grand gala and award ceremony on January 17.

