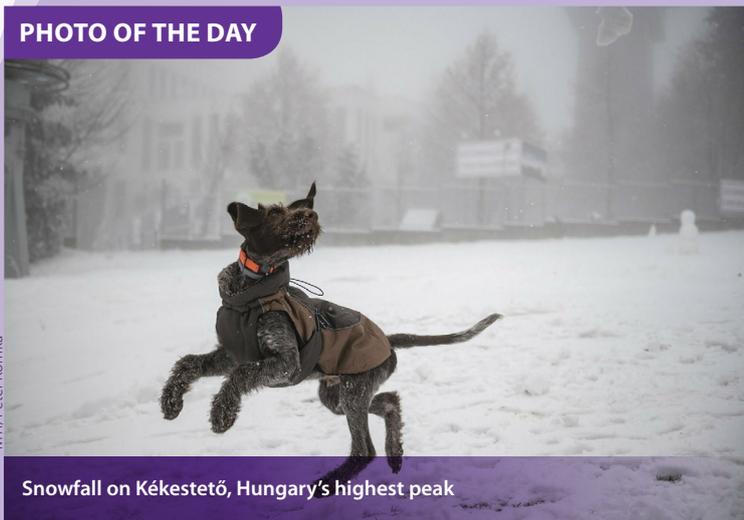


PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Péter Komka

Snowfall on Kékestető, Hungary's highest peak

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events related to the war in Ukraine

European Parliament holds plenary session

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ HAILS HUNGARY-TURKEY COOPERATION

Cooperation between Hungary and Turkey is a “great help in overcoming difficulties”, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said after a meeting of the Hungarian-Turkish economic mixed committee in Budapest on Monday.

Without cooperation with Turkey, Hungary’s energy security would not be guaranteed and the country would not have achieved several of its economic records last year, the foreign ministry cited Péter Szijjártó as saying at a joint press conference with Turkey’s Minister of Industry and Technology Mustafa Varank. Central and eastern Europe are facing enormous difficulties due to the war in Ukraine and the related sanctions, Szijjártó said. “The region is seeing uncertainty, brutal price increases and supply issues both in the economy and energy supply,” the minister said. “The cooperation between Turkey and Hungary has been and will continue to be ... a great help in overcoming these challenges.” As a neighbour of Ukraine, Hungary’s interest lies in peace being achieved there as soon as possible, Szijjártó said. “Peace is needed, and peace requires talks, which requires mediators,” Szijjártó said, expressing Hungary’s appreciation of Turkey’s successful mediation in the resumption of grain exports.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ: TURKSTREAM PIPELINE CRITICAL TO HUNGARY'S ENERGY SECURITY

The TurkStream gas pipeline is what guarantees Hungary's energy security, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said on Monday, arguing it was the only east-west pipeline in Europe operating with 100% capacity. Hungary received 4.8 billion cubic metres of gas via the TurkStream pipeline last year, which covers around half of the country's total consumption, the foreign ministry cited Szijjártó as saying at a joint press conference with Turkey's Minister of Industry and Technology Mustafa Varank in Budapest. The loss of this delivery route would make it impossible for Hungary to get the gas it needs, the minister added.

Szijjártó also emphasised the importance of diversification, the inclusion of new energy sources and the construction of new pipelines. The most realistic options, he said, were natural gas from Azerbaijan and liquefied natural gas (LNG) coming in to Turkish ports. Talks are already under way between state-owned energy company MVM and its Turkish partner on the volume and scheduling of LNG imports by Hungary, he said. The minister also noted that gas imports from Azerbaijan would require infrastructure developments, for which he said he expected support from the European Union. Meanwhile, Szijjártó

noted that both Hungary and Turkey are building nuclear plants with the same partner and technology. He welcomed that all sixteen heat pumps for the four reactors being built in Turkey are made in Hungary.

As regards economic challenges, Szijjártó said Turkish-Hungarian cooperation had contributed significantly to keeping Hungary's GDP growth rate above the European average in the recent period and helping the country achieve record investments, exports and employment. Bilateral trade turnover reached a new record last year, he said, adding that there are now some 100 Turkish companies in Hungary employing close to 2,200 people. Turkey's VakifBank has opened a branch in Budapest and the two countries are holding a joint cultural season in 2024, Szijjártó said. In 2025, the two countries will celebrate Hungarian-Turkish science and technology and there are many Hungarian companies benefitting from opportunities in Turkey, Szijjártó added. The minister then presented Varank with the Medium Cross of the Order of Merit of Hungary in recognition of his role in Hungarian-Turkish cooperation.

SZIJJÁRTÓ DISCUSSES ENERGY SECURITY WITH BULGARIAN COUNTERPART

Hungary's natural gas supplies are secure thanks to reliable transit states like Bulgaria, as well as its suppliers,

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Sofia on Monday, after talks with Nikolay Milkov, his Bulgarian counterpart. Hungary received 4.8 billion cubic meters of gas through Bulgaria last year, Szijjártó told a joint press conference. The double threat of the war in Ukraine and migration pressure from the south is making liable cooperation between the countries even more valuable, he said. Hungary counts on further reliable deliveries, he said. The strategic goal is to access new resources for projects such as infrastructure development to increase the role of Azeri gas in the region, he said.

"This is a European issue; I think we central Europeans are right to expect the European Union to support pipeline construction and infrastructure development to secure future gas supplies for central Europe," he said. Szijjártó thanked Bulgaria for fuel rod deliveries to the Paks nuclear plant via Bulgarian ports on the Black Sea since December, "when EU regulations made avian deliveries from Russia impossible". Meanwhile, Szijjártó said the Western Balkans had become part of the most important continental route for migrants. "Due to Brussels' pro-migration stance, central European countries have to make greater efforts to stop illegal migration," he said. Bulgaria and Hungary both "performed beyond their abilities" by building border fences and employing "enormous human resources" to stop illegal migration, he added. "It is unacceptable and very dangerous to the EU's security that Brussels refuses

to support real border security and does not fund ... border protection infrastructure," he said. He called it "shameful" that Bulgaria was "still not member of the Schengen Area". Hungary will not accept "double standards where clear and objective requirements set down in contracts are replaced by subjective criteria," he said. Bulgaria has fulfilled the former, and so deserves Schengen membership, he said.

ECON DEVELOPMENT MINISTER AT TALKS WITH TURKEY'S MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY

Minister of Economic Development Márton Nagy held talks with Turkey's Minister of Industry and Technology Mustafa Varank in Budapest on Monday, the ministry said. The sides were in agreement about the importance of Turkish-Hungarian economic links and industrial cooperation, the statement said. Nagy said that in an economic environment burdened by a war and sanctions, efforts must be made to maintain sensible and respectful cooperation. Economic cooperation between Turkey and Hungary is flourishing and bilateral trade is at an unprecedented level, he added. Records show that exports grew by 17% in the first ten months of last year, he said. The intensity of Turkish-Hungarian links is demonstrated by the fact that nearly 100 Turkish companies employ nearly 2,000 people in Hungary and several

hundred more jobs are planned to be created thanks to future Turkish investments, the ministry said. The ministers said talks would continue on economic cooperation, with plans to further enhance links especially in fishing, health industry and pharmaceuticals, food industry, tourism and energy, the ministry added.

HUNGARY SENDS EMERGENCY AID TO ATTACKED NIGERIAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

Hungary is providing 3,000 US dollars in emergency humanitarian assistance to the Nigerian Catholic Church through the Hungary Helps scheme after last weekend's attack on a church in north-west Nigeria, the foreign ministry said on Monday. On Sunday, a group of bandits attacked a church in Kafin-Koro, killing Father Isaac Achi by burning him alive in his home. Another priest was hospitalised with gunshot wounds. The emergency aid is meant to help with the treatment of the surviving priest and the reconstruction of the torched parish, the ministry said. The Hungary Helps Programme has supported African Christian communities threatened by violence since 2017. In recent years, Hungary Helps has been cooperating with Nigeria's Christian churches in aiding victims of terrorism and internal refugees, the reconstruction of destroyed churches, schools and homes and offering scholarships

to young people from persecuted Christian communities.

HOLLIK: HUNGARIAN LEFT- WING MEPS POSSIBLY HELD TIES WITH POLITICIAN ACCUSED IN BRUSSELS CORRUPTION SCANDAL

Ruling Fidesz said on Monday that left-wing Hungarian MEPs possibly maintained links with the defendant in a corruption scandal in Brussels. Fidesz communications director István Hollik said in a video on Facebook that based on reports about the Brussels corruption scandal, there was "strong suspicion" that "MEPs of the dollar left-wing", including Klára Dobrev and István Ujhelyi possibly maintained links with the primary defendant in the scandal, former vice president of the EP Eva Kaili. The "dollar left-wing" denies this, but they shared Facebook entries and photos including "grinning selfies" showing that links with Kaili went further than being work colleagues, Hollik said. He called on members of the "dollar left-wing" to talk openly about alleged foreign influence in Hungary's parliamentary elections last year, as well as "their role in the Brussels corruption scandal".

ECUMENICAL PRAYER WEEK GETS UNDER WAY IN BUDAPEST

Meeting another person is encountering Jesus himself, and "he

awaits our response”, Cardinal Peter Erdő, the head of the Hungarian Catholic Church, said at the opening of the ecumenical prayer week in Budapest on Sunday evening.

“Jesus expects us to have as much love for all other people as we owe him,” the cardinal told participants in the service. Only those able to give love to others can live a full life, “those that do not shun the old and the sick, that will have children and love them,” he added. A full life, however, requires “Jesus taking over the heart”, he warned.

Bishop Tamás Fabiny, the leader of the Hungarian Evangelical Church, said “today’s service and the prayer week will not be creditable unless we speak up for the persecuted, the suffering, the miserable”. He warned that a testimony of God should be made every day rather than “praising him only during a service”.

The service was attended by President Katalin Novák, and István Nagy, the minister of agriculture. The prayer week has been organised by the Hungarian Catholic Bishops’ Conference and the Ecumenical Council of Hungarian Churches. January 15 has been observed as a day of prayer for persecuted Christians since 2018.

MTVA CONCLUDES ‘HISTORIC’ BROADCAST AGREEMENT FOR OLYMPICS UNTIL 2032

Hungary’s public media services and support fund MTVA has concluded

a “historic” agreement for the public media to broadcast all summer and winter Olympic Games between 2026 and 2032, Dániel Papp, MTVA’s chief executive, announced on Monday. MTVA had earlier won the exclusive right to broadcast the 2024 Paris Olympics, Papp said. He called it an important achievement that under the agreement concluded with the Hungarian Olympic Committee (MBO) viewers with cable subscriptions will be able to tune in for the entire Games on MTVA’s sports channels. “With the Paris Games and the consecutive four Olympics, our objective, besides presenting the world’s star athletes and most popular events the Olympics, is to show Hungarians to the Hungarian people...” Papp said. “Sport is part of universal and Hungarian history, which in an ideal world serves as one of the most important tools for building national identity and pride,” he said.

SOCIALISTS, JOBBIK PROPOSE CTTEE HEARING OF INTERIOR MINISTER, POLICE CHIEF OVER OFFICER’S DEATH

Opposition lawmakers on Monday proposed the committee hearing of Interior Minister Sándor Pintér and national police chief János Balogh in connection with a case that left one policeman dead and two injured last week. Last week, police accosted a man who seemed to be breaking into a flat in Budapest. The man stabbed three policemen before being shot

in the leg and arrested while trying to flee. Socialist Tamás Harangozó and Jobbik’s László György Lukács, the deputy heads of parliament’s defence and public safety committee, proposed to convene the committee and hear Pintér and Balogh on the details of the investigation. They proposed to expand the hearing to the matter of issuing body armour and bodycams for policemen working as patrolmen, money guards or on railways, the statement said.

MORE THAN 11,000 UKRAINE REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON SUNDAY

Fully 5,097 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Sunday, while 6,300 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 218 people, ORFK said on Monday. Budapest received 115 people, 37 children among them, by train.

CONSTRUCTION SECTOR OUTPUT UP 7.0% IN NOV

Output of Hungary’s construction sector rose by an annual 7.0% in November, after falling by 2.5% in the previous month, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Monday. Output of the buildings segment increased by 18.6% but civil engineering output slipped by 6.9%. In absolute terms, construction sector output

reached 798 billion forints (EUR 2bn) in November. The buildings segment accounted for 62% of the total. In a month-on-month comparison, construction sector output expanded by 6.9%, adjusted for seasonal and workday effects. For the period January-November, output increased by 4.2% year-on-year. Order stock was 1.0% lower at the end of November than twelve months earlier. Buildings segment orders rose by 5.0% but civil engineering orders fell by 5.0%. New orders climbed 3.8% during the period, as new orders in the buildings segment were up 9.6% but new civil engineering orders decreased by 4.2%.

AUDI HUNGARIA ENGINE OUTPUT CLIMBS TO 1,677,545 IN 2022

The local unit of German car maker Audi produced 1,677,545 engines at its plant in Győr, in north-western

Hungary last year, Audi Hungaria said on Monday. Output was up 56,778 from a year earlier. Audi Hungaria's vehicle output rose by 119 to 171,134. Audi Hungaria turned out 221,141 three-cylinder and 684,018 four-cylinder petrol engines, 293,667 diesel engines, 21,745 five-cylinder Otto-cycle engines, 265,857 six-cylinder petrol and 77,931 six-cylinder diesel engines, and 5,089 ten-cylinder engines. It also produced 108,097 electric motors, 11,121 more than in 2021. Audi Hungaria made 21,466 plug-in-hybrids and 25,181 mild hybrid Q3 models. Audi Hungaria's headcount stood at 11,957 at year-end, 26 fewer people than at the end of 2021. Chairman Alfons Dintner said 2022 was "successful in spite of challenges". Developments in digitalisation, electromobility and sustainability are planned for this year, while the business model advances, too, especially the Shared Competence Center, he added.

BORDER TRAFFIC WITH SERBIA UP IN 2022

The number of lorries entering Hungary from Serbia at the Rösztke border station was up 23% between 2019 and 2022, while Tompa station saw an increase of 55%, the customs and border control authority said in a statement on Monday. According to the statement, a daily 459 vehicles crossed into Hungary at Rösztke in 2022, and 344 at Tompa. Leaders of the authority met their Serbian counterparts last week to review a 2020 agreement, aimed at increasing border traffic between the two countries. They reinforced both countries' commitment to further increase the capacity of border stations through bilateral cooperation. They also decided to set up a team of experts, scheduled to meet in Budapest in April.