

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



Prime Minister Viktor Orbán meets with Željka Cvijanović, the head of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in Budapest

MTI/Prime Minister's Press Office/Zoltán Fischer

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Stats office reports on Nov wages**

**Budapest municipal assembly meets**

**Events related to the war in Ukraine**

**European Parliament holds plenary session**

## TOP STORY

# SZIJJÁRTÓ: AZERI GAS KEY FOR ENERGY SECURITY

The increased natural gas production in Azerbaijan can play a key role in the energy security of Hungary and central Europe, the foreign minister said, adding that this required regional infrastructure developments supported by the EU.

The severe energy crisis has made Azerbaijan more important for Europe, Péter Szijjártó told a press conference held jointly with Azerbaijan's economy minister, according to a foreign ministry statement. He argued that increased natural gas production in the South Caucasus country was the best option for Europe to diversify its gas supplies in the short and medium term. "If Europe can't acquire new energy sources, if it can't build new energy supply routes, then energy supply won't be secure." It is in Hungary's interest to incorporate Azeri energy sources into its energy mix as soon as possible, the minister said, adding that this required large-scale infrastructure developments in south-eastern and central Europe, too. Szijjártó said Hungary has turned to the European Commission together with Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, asking Brussels to treat the matter as a priority and provide support for the developments needed to guarantee the region's energy security. He welcomed Azerbaijan's aim to double gas supplies to Europe by 2027.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY, AZERBAIJAN TO RAISE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP TO NEXT LEVEL**

Hungary and Azerbaijan will raise their existing strategic partnership to the next level during a visit by Azeri President Ilham Aliyev this month, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, told a press conference held jointly with Azerbaijan's economy minister on Tuesday. Both sides are politically committed to a gas delivery agreement, Szijjártó said, adding that the Hungarian government was hopeful that Azeri gas could start contributing to Hungary's energy security as soon as possible. Talks between Hungarian and Azeri energy companies are already under way, he added. Szijjártó said the foundations for a gas supply agreement were sound, noting the two countries' strategic partnership.

Szijjártó underscored the importance of creating the contractual and physical conditions needed to deliver the gas from the southern corridor to the central part of Europe. He said this situation would make it clear whether the European Union had only been paying lip service to diversification and the importance of central Europe's energy security, or if it was actually prepared to take steps to guarantee it.

## **ORBÁN DISCUSSES HUNGARY, BOSNIA- HERZEGOVINA COOPERATION WITH PRESIDENT**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán met Željka Cvijanović, the head of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in Budapest on Tuesday, to discuss matters of international security and developing cooperation between the two countries. In "dangerous times", the stability and security of Bosnia and Herzegovina is especially important for Hungary, Orbán said. Hungary continues to be open to cooperation and to supporting Bosnia-Herzegovina's EU integration and economic development, he said. Cvijanović thanked Hungary for its help, and said it was important to continue "lively dialogue" and to strengthen economic and trade relations.

## **BUDAPEST TO HOST NEXT CPACHUNGARY IN MAY**

Budapest will again play host to a Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), on May 4-5, the event organiser said on Tuesday. The keynote speaker of the event organised in partnership with the American Conservative Union will again be Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, the Centre for Fundamental Rights said on Facebook. CPAC's first forum in Europe focusing on

the values expressed in the motto "God, Homeland, Family" was held in Budapest in 2022, the centre noted. The event brought together some 1,500 participants including 200 foreign decision-makers, journalists and influencers, it added. CPAC Hungary this year will focus on "the international community-building of nationally minded forces, a nightmare of the liberals," the centre said.

## **NAGY: GOVT DETERMINED TO BYPASS RECESSION THIS YEAR**

The Hungarian government is determined to avoid a recession this year, and its goal is to secure growth of 1.5% this year following a 4.5% growth in 2022, notwithstanding the mounting economic challenges, Márton Nagy, the minister of economic development said on Tuesday, opening a business lunch of the Hungarian-French Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Nagy also said that inflation and the twin deficits must be handled, and for this the government's economic policy must always be innovative. Inflation is expected to fall to the single digits by year-end, he said, adding that the public budget deficit would ease to around 70% of GDP.

Among the economic challenges, Nagy noted the European energy crisis and the bloc's falling competitiveness, the re-ignition of China's economy, and an impending US-EU trade war. Bearing in mind Hungary's export-

and investment-driven economy, new financing structures and fresh energy, industry, and employment policies are needed, he said. Further, fresh thinking on industrial policy is needed alongside a reappraisal of strategic sectors, with the vehicle industry, battery production, health and pharmaceutical industry, energy industry, food industry, research and development, higher education, transport, logistics, telecommunications, tourism, banking and insurance sectors, military industry as priority sectors, he said.

A greater number of better quality investments must be brought to Hungary, the minister said, stressing the importance of improving competitiveness and cutting red tape. Investments in Hungary are likely to reach 20,000 billion forints in 2023, the annual inflow of FDI in relation to investments overall must be kept above 20%, he said. In 2020, French companies accounted for the fifth highest amount of FDI in Hungary, he noted.

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### **FIDESZ MEP WELCOMES EP CTTEE STANCE AGAINST GREENWASHING**

The European Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) on Monday adopted a proposal on greenwashing, proposed by Fidesz MEP Edina Tóth. The resolution bans greenwashing and takes a stance

against misleading consumers. "The decision to adopt the opinion is a major success as it protects European consumers from unfair practices, which is in Hungary's interest," Tóth said. In order for consumers to become "real participants" in the green transition, they need to receive adequate information, Tóth said. "According to EU surveys, nearly 40% of environment-related statements on products are false. The new regulations are expected to lead to a tightening of legislation," she said. "By adopting the proposal, we are ensuring new tools for consumers to make well-founded decisions and to increase the sustainability of our economies and products," the MEP said.

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### **HUNGARY DONATES 304,000 DOSES OF COVID VACCINE TO NICARAGUA**

Hungary is donating 304,000 doses of Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine to Nicaragua to help the country in boosting its inoculation rate, the foreign minister said on Tuesday. The donation will be handed over in Nicaragua on Wednesday, Péter Szijjártó said on Facebook. "The pandemic still poses a serious challenge to many countries in the world which face a serious task to ensure a sufficient amount of vaccines," he said, adding that Hungary was in a position to offer help since it had moved fast enough in securing its own vaccine supplies early on.

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### **HUNGARY, UKRAINE TOP CUSTOMS, BORDER CONTROL OFFICIALS MEET AT ZÁHONY**

Top officials of the customs and border control authorities of Hungary and Ukraine and representatives of freight carriers met to discuss speeding up cross-border transport in Záhony on Tuesday, Hungary's tax and customs office NAV said. The meeting was initiated by NAV in the framework of an agreement concluded in 2011 on accelerating cross-border passenger and cargo traffic, NAV said in a statement. The participants reviewed results achieved so far thanks to the measures, NAV said, noting a 3% increase last year in the number of freight carriers crossing the border daily at Záhony from Ukraine compared with 2019. At the Beregsurány border crossing station, the increase was 130% during the same period, NAV said.

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### **SOME 8,500 UKRAINIAN REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON MONDAY**

Fully 4,750 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Monday, while 3,673 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 133 people, ORFK said on Tuesday. Budapest received 58 people, 19 children among them, by train.

## HUNGARY CBANK KEEPS BASE RATE ON HOLD

Hungarian rate-setters decided to keep the base rate on hold at 13% at a regular policy meeting on Tuesday, the first such meeting this year. The Monetary Council also decided at its policy meeting to keep the central bank's interest rate corridor unchanged. The decision was in line with expectations.

In a statement released after the meeting, the Council said it was necessary to maintain tight monetary conditions over a prolonged period, "which will ensure that inflation expectations are anchored and the inflation target is achieved in a sustainable manner". The Council said the protracted war between Russia and Ukraine, the energy crisis in Europe and the generally rising interest rate environment would continue to cause uncertainty. They said investor sentiment had improved slightly since the last interest rate decision. "Risk appetite has been mainly influenced by macroeconomic data releases, the economic outlook and expectations related to the monetary policy of the world's leading central banks," the statement said.

The Council said the growth rate this year was likely to be slowed by both domestic and external demand factors. "The decline in real incomes,

rising corporate costs, delayed public investment and the stricter interest rate environment all have a restraining impact on domestic demand," they said. Despite subdued global economic activity, Hungary's foreign market share is expected to increase due to growing domestic export capacities, which the Council said was also supported by the dynamic expansion of battery production. Inflation is seen decreasing slowly in the first half of 2023, and then more significantly from the middle of the year, the Council said. It said CPI will return to the central bank tolerance band in 2024.

## PROSECUTION RAISES CHARGES AGAINST HUMAN SMUGGLERS WHO TRANSPORTED MIGRANTS SAVED BY POLICE

Hungary's public prosecution service has raised charges against two human smugglers who transported migrants in a van that was crowded beyond its capacity, and it was only thanks to police action that their lives were saved. The smugglers are charged with bodily harm of the migrants who were crammed into their vehicle to the extent that their lives were put in danger, the Pest County Prosecutor's Office said in a statement on Tuesday.

The two foreign suspects entered Hungary in a van rented in Belgium

in April 2022. They are charged with selling transport services to migrants who illegally entered Hungary across the Hungary-Serbia border to the Hungary-Austria border. Fully 19 illegal migrants were transported near Kópháza on April 21, while three days later 38 people were crammed into the same van with cargo space of barely 13 cubic meters. The drive to the Austrian border took almost 3 hours non-stop as the migrants struggled to breathe.

The driver only stopped when police pulled the van aside near Inárcs, 20km southeast of Budapest, the statement said. One of the migrants was in a life-threatening condition due to lack of oxygen and water, according to the charges.

## HUNGARIAN TEAM TAKES BRONZE AT BOCUSE D'OR FINAL

Hungary's team led by Bence Dalnoki, the sous chef of Budapest's Michelin-starred Stand Restaurant, came in third at the Bocuse d'Or 2023 international gastronomy contest final in Lyon. Dalnoki was joined by commis chef Patrik Nyikos and coached by Tamás Széll, who won the 2016 Bocuse d'Or Europe. The team was ranked second at the Bocuse d'Or Europe, the continental qualifier for the final, hosted in Budapest in March. The top prize went to a team from Denmark.