

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Prime Minister's Press Office/Zoltán Fischer

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán meets Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Cairo

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office releases figures on 2022 Q4 investments, Jan PPI

Plenary session of parliament

Events related to the war in Ukraine

TOP STORY

ORBÁN, SISI HOLD TALKS IN CAIRO

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi discussed the war in Ukraine, illegal migration and Hungary-Egypt bilateral relations at a meeting in Cairo on Tuesday.

The sides said that cooperation between Hungary and Egypt went back 95 years and it had never been as good as in the past few years. Orbán said after the meeting that Hungary was facing several dangers, including the Russia-Ukraine war. "Hungary has a vested interest in peace and we will make every effort to reduce the danger of the escalation of war," he said. "We are ready to engage in disputes with the West because we want a diplomatic solution, ceasefire and peace talks," he added. Orbán welcomed the Egyptian president agreeing with the need to move the conflict towards peace instead of escalation. Orbán said the second source of danger was the forming of blocs in the world instead of connections being built, which he said caused serious losses to Hungary and central Europe. He thanked Egypt for its actions concerning migration. "We do not want homeless migrants torn away from their place of birth to populate the world, but want people to succeed in their place of birth," he said. "Europe owes thanks, respect and support to Egypt for its work," he said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY, EGYPT SIGN DEAL ON JOINT USE OF SUEZ CANAL ECONOMIC ZONE

The governments of Hungary and Egypt have signed an agreement on cooperation in the Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZONE), giving Hungarian companies a good chance to launch investments in the region, the Hungarian foreign minister said on Tuesday. Péter Szijjártó told a Hungarian-Egyptian business forum in Cairo that the government had “created the best possible conditions” for successful cooperation between the two countries’ companies. In political cooperation, Hungary and Egypt signed a strategic partnership agreement earlier in the day, he said. Hungary’s Eximbank has opened a 100 million euro credit line to financially support cooperation between Hungarian and Egyptian businesses, he added. On bilateral economic ties, Szijjártó noted that in a flagship project of cooperation, the Hungarian transport industry received the largest commission of its history from Egypt, and has recently delivered 1,350 railway carriages. Szijjártó said the delegation to Egypt included businessmen representing “world-class Hungarian technology” in water management, infocommunications and transport, hoping to “conduct fruitful talks” with Egyptian companies.

Earlier in the day, Szijjártó said Egypt and Hungary had been in long-

term cooperation based on mutual respect, with both countries profiting a lot in the recent period. He said that during their official visit in Cairo, the Hungarian delegation will sign several agreements including one on nuclear cooperation aimed at an exchange of experience, training experts and student exchange programmes. Szijjártó also announced the start of negotiations on buying liquefied natural gas from Egypt to be used in Hungary from 2026, thus increasing the country’s energy security. According to Szijjártó, higher education cooperation with Egypt will also be promoted, with the number of scholarships at Hungarian universities for Egyptian students increasing from an annual 115 to 200. Concerning the Ukraine war, Szijjártó said “Egypt is also in the peace camp ... urging a diplomatic solution”. The country is “part of the global majority, which undoubtedly falls outside Europe, but which is eager to see the war in Ukraine end,” he said.

PARLT SCRAPS MANDATORY CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP FOR DOCTORS

Parliament passed a law scrapping doctors’ mandatory membership in the Hungarian Medical Chamber (MOK) on Tuesday. Parliament adopted the law with 122 votes in favour, 31 against and no abstentions. The fast-tracked bill, which the interior ministry submitted on Monday, aimed at eliminating opportunities for MOK to “abuse its powers”, while

also abolishing mandatory chamber membership for doctors, the ministry said in a statement earlier this week. Péter Takács, the state secretary for health care, said in Parliament on Tuesday that the measure was taken to ensure “high quality, safe health care accessible to all”. MOK was hobbling the introduction of a new on-call system, and so “putting the health care of Hungarians at risk”, he said. Ongoing code of ethics procedures against members of the chamber will be transferred to the Health Science Council, with the chamber retaining the right to give its opinion on procedures.

FOREIGN MINISTRY: HUNGARY WON’T LET ITSELF BE DRAGGED INTO WAR

Hungary will not let itself be dragged into the war in Ukraine and continues to urge a ceasefire and peace talks, a spokesman for the foreign ministry said on Tuesday. Máté Paczolay reacted to Ukrainian deputy foreign minister Yevhen Perebyinis’s remark in an interview with Slovak daily SME Svet that “Hungary supports the destruction of the Ukrainian nation.”

“This is obvious provocation, not to mention in an appalling tone,” Paczolay told MTI. “We will not let anyone drag us into the war; we continue to urge a ceasefire and peace talks.” In the interview with SME Svet, Perebyinis

said Hungary was directly aiding Russia by “blocking” sanctions against it, adding that Ukraine was disappointed in Hungary’s attitude. He said Hungary’s position that “the path to peace entails Ukraine giving up its resistance against Russia” was “disappointing”. He said Russian President Vladimir Putin’s aim was to invade all of Ukraine as well as “the destruction of the Ukrainian nation”. This, he insisted, meant that “Hungary supports the destruction of the Ukrainian nation.”

MI HAZÁNK DEMANDS PUBLICATION OF BAILIFFS’ ASSET DECLARATIONS

The opposition Mi Hazánk party demands public access to the asset declarations of bailiffs. Zsuzsanna Fiszter, an expert of the party, told a press conference on Tuesday that the Authority of Regulated Activities should also conduct probes into the assets of bailiffs appointed after 2015. Fiszter also suggested that foreclosure should be made a not for profit activity. She suggested that bailiffs were “exploiting” the people and their “getting rich is unfair”. Fiszter noted that bailiffs were obliged to submit asset declarations under a 2007 law, however, according to the data protection authority, that information was not to be published. Mi Hazánk expects those documents to be made public, similarly to those of local and municipal deputies, she added.

PÁRBESZÉD TO STAY AWAY FROM PARLT DEBATE ON 2023 BUDGET LAW AMENDMENTS

Opposition Párbeszéd will not attend the parliamentary debate scheduled for Wednesday about amendment proposals submitted to Hungary’s 2023 central budget, the party’s co-leader said. Bence Tordai told an online press conference on Tuesday that the assembly “will approve a budget which has already been published in the official Government Gazette which makes the presence of opposition, and even of government lawmakers, absolutely unnecessary”. He noted that the 2023 budget cut allocations “for almost all highly important sectors and areas including health care, welfare, education, law enforcement and green development”. The wages of civil servants have also been reduced, he added. Tamás Mellár, a party lawmaker, said that in the current economic situation the government’s objectives of economic growth and fiscal balance would not be possible to maintain.

NEARLY 8,000 UKRAINE REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON MONDAY

Fully 3,827 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Monday, while 3,877 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence

permits valid for 30 days to 41 people, ORFK said on Tuesday. Budapest received 97 people, 29 children among them, by train, ORFK said.

MAGYAR POSTA TO LAY OFF OVER 1,000 PEOPLE

State-owned Magyar Posta will lay off 1,200 of its employees, the company told MTI on Tuesday. The company said its management was “forced to take the decision to preserve the company’s stable operation in the current economic situation affected by sanctions”. The decision will not affect Magyar Posta’s level of service, it added. Magyar Posta said earlier this month that it decided to close more than 300 post offices for good.

HUNGARY CBANK LEAVES BASE RATE ON HOLD

Hungarian rate-setters decided to leave the base rate unchanged at 13% at a regular policy meeting on Tuesday. The Council also decided to keep the central bank’s O/N deposit rate at 12.5% and the O/N collateralised loan rate at 25%. The decision was in line with expectations. The rate-setters signalled an end to the tightening cycle at their monthly policy meeting in September, but said tight monetary conditions would be maintained with a focus on sterilising liquidity and improving monetary policy transmission. On October 14, the policymakers announced a decision to launch O/N deposit quick tenders

on a daily basis. The central bank has since offered the liquidity sterilisation instrument at a rate of 18%.

In a statement released after the meeting, the Council said it was necessary to maintain the current level of the base rate over a prolonged period in order to achieve the central bank's inflation target in a sustainable manner. The Council said disinflationary effects were expected to increase in the coming months, "causing a turnaround in inflation". It added that tight monetary conditions contributed to avoiding second-round inflationary effects. Energy, commodity and food prices have fallen below their pre-war levels, the statement said, adding that the moderating effect on pricing arising from the fall in domestic demand and, from the spring months, the fading of base effects would support the decline in inflation. The Council said it expects a gradual decrease in inflation in the first half of the year before a more significant decrease from the middle of the year. CPI will return to the central bank tolerance

band in 2024, it added. GDP growth is also expected to pick up in the middle of the year, the Council said.

NBH Deputy Governor Barnabás Virág told a press conference that a change to the 13% base rate was not on the agenda. He said that although disinflationary effects were strengthening, falling domestic demand was acting as a "disciplining force". Prices are expected to remain at peak levels for months, which will be followed by a slow decline in inflation, before accelerating in the second half of the year, he said.

CLOSE TO TWO-THIRDS OF COMPANIES PLAN PAY RISES THIS YEAR

Some 62% of companies surveyed by recruiting site Profession.hu plan pay rises of 6-10% this year, the site said on Tuesday. Around 87% of respondents said the aim of the pay rise was to retain employees while 51% also said they wanted to make new hires. About 80% said the pay rises will affect the entire company in

general. Seven in ten companies have no plans to change the amount of non-wage benefits. Around 29% said they plan to increase this amount by 16% on average and 4% will reduce it by 12%. Profession.hu surveyed several hundred companies that used its services in January.

WIZZAIR TO SUSPEND MOLDOVA SERVICES CITING SECURITY RISKS

Low-cost airline WizzAir said on Monday that it will suspend all flights to and from Moldova from March 14, citing security concerns. WizzAir said in a statement that all flights to and from Chisinau international airport will be suspended following an assessment of the security level of Moldovan airspace, it added. WizzAir said in a statement that in an effort to counterbalance the missing services, it will increase the number of flights to nearby Iasi (Jászvásár) in Romania from a number of European departure points, except for Budapest and Prague.