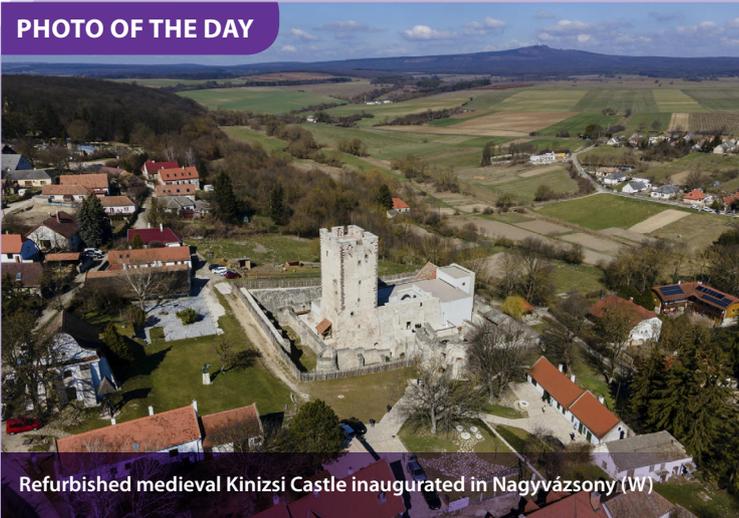


## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Tamás Vasvári

Refurbished medieval Kinizsi Castle inaugurated in Nagyvázsony (W)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**OSCE foreign ministers meet in Vienna**

**Central banking in emerging markets intl conference in Budapest**

**Events related to the war in Ukraine**

## TOP STORY

# ORBÁN: GLOBAL MAJORITY FOR PEACE

The voice of peace should be at least as loud as that of war, and it should be made clear that the global majority wants peace, Viktor Orbán said in Ankara.

Speaking at the summit of the Organisation of Turkic States (OTS), the prime minister said Europe was “suffering from war psychosis”, and was being drawn into the war in Ukraine. He thanked Turkic leaders for “strengthening the voice of peace”. The prime minister also thanked Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for his successful mediation between the warring parties so far, and asked him to continue his efforts. “This is the only way there can be a chance for peace,” he said. Orbán also thanked Erdogan for Hungarian-Turkish coordination within NATO. The war is the number-one issue in Europe today, which puts Hungary in a difficult situation, Orbán said. Because Ukraine is a neighbouring country, the effects of the war on Hungary are “severe and direct”, he said, noting high inflation and record energy prices. Many Hungarians have died in the war as well, given that ethnic Hungarians living in western Ukraine are also being conscripted into the army, Orbán said. Saving lives is the priority for Hungary, and so it is promoting a ceasefire and peace talks, he added.

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## **ORBÁN: EU POWER DYNAMICS SHIFTING**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in Ankara that besides the issue of war in Europe, the whole of the continent's power dynamics were shifting and this would impact the Turkic world. Hungary, he added, also sees a danger of the re-emergence of global economic blocs. This goes against Hungary's interests, as the country sees its future in collectiveness and connections, Orbán said. Turkic states can play a key role in this, he said, arguing that European, Caucasus and Central Asian countries, linked by mutual respect, could set an example to the rest of the world. Hungary is in favour of a new phase in economic, trade and energy links with the Turkic states, Orbán said. It wants to participate in the Turkic investment fund as soon as possible, he said, adding that the necessary finances were available.

Orbán expressed his condolences on Hungary's behalf over the devastating earthquake that hit Türkiye last month, praising the courageous efforts of rescue workers. Hungary also sent search and rescue teams to the earthquake-hit areas in the first days after the disaster, who managed to save many people, he added. The prime minister noted that Hungary on Thursday delivered 100 tonnes of hospital

equipment to Türkiye's disaster management authority, adding that Türkiye could also count on Hungary when it came to the reconstruction efforts. Orbán said that seeing the development Türkiye had gone through over the last 23 years and the "fantastic progress" it had made over the last decade under Erdogan's leadership, he was certain that the reconstruction would be successful. On the occasion of Hungary's recent March 15 national holiday, Orbán noted that after the Germans and Russians crushed the revolution of 1848, hundreds of army officers, scientists and politicians fled to Türkiye where they were welcomed.

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## **ORBÁN-ERDOGAN MEETING: 'DRIFTING INTO WAR NOT AN OPTION'**

Talks between Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Ankara focused on the war in Ukraine and energy security issues, the PM's press chief said. In the statement, Bertalan Havasi said Hungary and Türkiye, as neighbours of Ukraine, had an interest in "a just peace" reached through diplomatic means as quickly as possible. "Drifting into war and its escalation must be avoided," the statement quoting the two leaders said. President Erdoğan thanked Hungary for the solidarity it showed in the aftermath of the earthquake in Türkiye and

for its "enormous help", especially the "heroic" efforts of Hungarian search and rescue teams. Orbán asked Erdoğan to ensure that Türkiye continues to be a reliable partner in the delivery of natural gas from the east, which is crucial for Hungarian energy security.

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## **ORBÁN MEETS UZBEK PRESIDENT**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán met Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and welcomed the two countries' strengthening ties, ahead of a summit of the Organisation of Turkic States (OTS) in Ankara. Orbán and Mirziyoyev said the implementation of previously signed agreements between the two countries was "progressing well". Hungary's OTP Bank is now present in Uzbekistan, opening opportunities to further economic cooperation, he said. The launch of regular airlines between Tashkent and Budapest is also a priority, they said.

Touching on the war in Ukraine, Orbán and Mirziyoyev said both countries had been hit hard by the war and the "sanctions-related crisis". Global changes have made the ceasefire and peace talks even more important, and the significance of cooperation between Hungary and Uzbekistan has also grown, they said. They called for a speedy political and economic rapprochement between Europe and central Asia.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY HAS SENT MEDICAL SUPPLIES TO AID TURKISH EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS**

Hungary has delivered another 105 tonnes of medical supplies to Türkiye, to help the treatment of those injured in the earthquake in February, the foreign minister said in Ankara. Speaking at the foreign ministers' meeting of the Organisation of Turkic States (OTS), Péter Szijjártó expressed his sympathies to Türkiye over the earthquakes on Feb. 6, which killed over 50,000 people in southeast Türkiye and Syria.

In the first stage of the rescue efforts, Hungary sent 167 rescue troops and 29 dogs who saved 35 lives, the ministry cited Szijjártó as saying. Later, Hungary delivered 1,500kg of medicine in an effort to relieve the Turkish healthcare system after the disaster. The latest delivery contained 105 tonnes of health-care and medical equipment, including "ventilators, bandages, IV equipment and medicine, assembled after consultation with Turkish authorities," he said. Successful rescue efforts require international cooperation. Hungary supports an agreement on coordinating disaster management in OTS states, and is ready to take an active part in the work, he said.

Szijjártó thanked OTS states for standing up for peace in the Russia-Ukraine war. "It is important that as many of us as possible speak the

language of peace, because a pro-war rhetoric is reigning in Europe ... and we who want peace need to strengthen our efforts," he said, noting that the majority of countries in the world want peace.

Hungary believes in cooperation based on mutual respect, as opposed to "a world tendency to create separate blocks in response to the war", he said. The country is therefore ready to participate in the Turkic Investment Fund, "a good example of such a cooperation", which would also bring economic and trade relations with OTS countries to another level, he said. The Fund "can also generate resources to the regional infrastructure developments necessary to ensure Hungarian energy security," he said. Hungary's energy supplies cannot be diversified without cooperation with the Turkic states, he said.

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## **DEFENCE MINISTER PAYS TRIBUTE TO HUNGARIAN WW2 SOLDIERS FALLEN IN VERTES MOUNTAINS**

Hungary's armed forces will always remember their fallen heroes, the defence minister said in Várgesztes, in northern Hungary, on Thursday, laying a wreath at the grave of the soldiers who fell in the surrounding Vértes mountains in the second world war. Most of the soldiers, who were part of the attempt to liberate Budapest, died when the Vértes front was broken through on March 16-17, Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said. The minister said

his grandfather was also seriously injured in the fighting, and over the next decades could only go back to pay his respects to his fallen brothers in arms in secret.

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## **KARÁCSONY: 'BUDAPEST IS AND WILL REMAIN A REPUBLIC'**

"Budapest is and will remain a republic," Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony said at the Freedom March organised in the capital on the March 15 national holiday marking the 175th anniversary of the 1848-49 revolution and freedom fight on Wednesday. In a speech, Karácsony said the republic has been "removed from the name of our country and removed from the operation of the state, too". He added that the republic "remains in free municipal councils, in the work of civil organisations, in the movements of teachers and students, in the Chamber of Physicians, in the struggles of defenders of the city and defenders of the law".

Pointing to local elections in 2024, he urged "free cities" to be protected and pressed for their numbers to grow. He warned against allowing Hungary to become "a pariah" in Europe. He said the "tragedy of 1848" originated in part from the truth that Europe's peoples can only be free together. "Whoever is wearing a cockade", he said, referring to ribbon rosette of the national colours adopted by the 1848

revolutionaries, “must also declare freedom and peace for Ukraine, Hungary and all peoples”.

## **DEMONSTRATION HELD IN CAPITAL**

Civil groups, unions and student organisations held a demonstration for the development of education on the March 15 national holiday in Budapest on Wednesday. The demonstration, dubbed Freedom March, was organised by the Adom student organisation, teachers unions PSZ and PDSZ, the Civil Base group and the Unified Student Front. Participants gathered at Heroes’ Square in downtown Budapest before marching along Andrassy Avenue to a stage at the intersection with Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Road.

Before the march, Fruzsina Schermann, the head of Adom, and Ákos Bozai, the organisation’s spokesman, said they were fighting “for a more loving and honest country in an increasingly illiberal democracy”. They criticised the government for “treating teachers as scapegoats”, blaming the interior minister, the state secretary in charge of education and politicians for the current situation. “Let this day be about unity and cohesion,” they said. The protestors waved Hungarian and European Union flags, along with flags made from chequered shirts, a garment that has become associated with teacher demonstrations. They chanted “Free

country, free education!” and “No teachers, no future!”

## **HUNGARIAN NATIONAL HOLIDAY MARKED IN US**

March 15 always carries a relevant message in the United States because Americans understand that Hungary is a freedom-loving country and that Hungarians have proven themselves to be freedom fighters throughout their history, Hungary’s ambassador to the US said, marking the national holiday in Washington on Wednesday. Szabolcs Takács told MTI that Hungary always had to make it clear in the US that it was in its national interest that the war in Ukraine should end as soon as possible. Though “pro-war rhetoric is very strong in American public life”, more and more people, particularly conservatives, acknowledge that Hungary is a credible representative of peace efforts, Takács said. “They must understand that it is in our national interest that we have peace in our neighbourhood as soon as possible because that’s the only way we can guarantee the safety, prosperity and economic progress of Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin,” the ambassador said. Hungary is committed to Ukraine’s independence and sovereignty but expects it to respect the rights of national minorities, he said. Takács on Wednesday laid a wreath at the statue of Hungarian 19th-century reform statesman Lajos Kossuth in the US Capitol Building before attending

Kossuth Foundation’s wreath-laying ceremony at the Kossuth House in Washington, DC.

The national holiday was also commemorated at a Hungarian citizenship oath ceremony in Chicago. Péter Szilágyi, the deputy state secretary for policies for Hungarian communities abroad, said March 15 should be reminder for Hungarians to be “insistent on everything our ancestors fought for”. “Those who choose to be Hungarian choose this heritage, and can be proud of it,” Szilágyi said.

## **MEDIA AUTHORITY HEAD DISMISSES PRESS ALLEGATIONS RELATED TO MEP DELEGATION’S VISIT**

The head of Hungary’s media authority, Anás Koltay, has dismissed an article by Hungarian daily Népszava claiming that a delegation of MEPs that recently visited Budapest had concluded in a report that media independence was being stamped out in the country. The National Media and Communications Authority (NMHH) head said that Népszava was professionally obliged to contact him and give him the opportunity to express his point of view before publishing the article, but had failed to live up to “generally recognised professional standards of media ethics”. Koltay said it was ironic that the delegation had sought to promote a free and independent media while selectively leaking

parts of its report, resulting in “the unscrupulous distortion of facts”. Koltay said he could not comment on the content of the report itself because he had not received it. “I trust the material will officially reach us sooner or later,” he said. “I wonder if these methods are among the means that the EP delegation wants to use to strengthen media freedom and independence. It is worrying,” he added. Koltay also rejected an allegation in the newspaper’s report that he had asked the delegation not to visit Hungary in the future. “On the contrary, I would encourage them to visit as often as possible in the hope that this may advance mutual understanding.”

### **BAKONDI: INTL COOPERATION NEEDED TO COMBAT PEOPLE SMUGGLING**

International cooperation is the only way European law enforcement can take effective action against people smugglers, the prime minister’s chief domestic security advisor, György Bakondi, told public news channel M1. Since people smugglers operate within an international network, EU law enforcement bodies like border agency Frontex would play a key role in coordinating the exchange of information and conducting international operations aimed at eliminating people smuggling rings, he said. But as long as the EU’s migration policy treats migration as a positive

phenomenon or something to be supported, the bloc will continue to attract people smuggling rings, he said. The Hungarian authorities have prevented more than 20,000 people from crossing the border illegally so far this year, and have launched proceedings against more than 200 people smugglers, Bakondi said.

### **DK: PARLT WELFARE CTTEE LACKS QUORUM**

A meeting of parliament’s welfare committee on Thursday lacked quorum for the third time, with government MPs staying away, committee head Zoltán Varga of the Democratic Coalition (DK) said. The meeting had been convened by the ruling parties, he told a press conference, adding that the meeting could not discuss DK’s proposal to raise pensions retroactively from January 2022, and to allow pensioners a one-off payment of 100,000 forints (EUR 254).

### **LMP: LOCALS KEPT IN DARK ABOUT ‘PLANNED’ KECSKEMÉT BATTERY PLANT**

Residents of Kecskemét, in central Hungary, have been kept in the dark about “plans” to build a battery plant there, an opposition LMP lawmaker has said. The green party has written to the foreign and trade minister about the matter, Bernadett Bakos told a press conference, adding it was “appalling” that residents had not been officially

informed about “the plan”. “Rumours about the plant have been circulating in the city for quite a while,” she said, adding that foreign ministry state secretary Levente Magyar had “let slip” that it was planned that a battery plant would supply the Kecskemet Mercedes car factory. “The government knows the majority of Hungarians, supported by opinion polls, reject the construction of another battery plant,” Bakos said, adding that “even Prime Minister Viktor Orbán speaks about the matter less often”. LMP wants to know how far along decision-making is regarding the Kecskemet plant, what its capacity would be, and whether the project would receive state support.

### **OVER 7,000 REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON WEDS**

Fully 3,179 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Wednesday, while 4,075 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 81 people, ORFK said on Thursday. Budapest received 69 people, 23 children among them, who arrived by train.

### **HUNGARY RECORDS 1,016 NEW CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS, 13 DEATHS REGISTERED LAST WEEK**

Fully 1,016 new Covid-19 infections were confirmed last week, while 13 fatalities were registered in connection

with the virus, the Coronavirus Press Centre said. The number of active infections stands at 4,663. Currently, 384 coronavirus patients are being treated in hospital, 8 intubated on a ventilator. The number of registered infections since the start of the pandemic has reached 2,197,820 in Hungary, while there have been 48,775 deaths.

### **ALMOST 63,000 PEOPLE DIAGNOSED WITH FLU- LIKE VIRUS**

Last week, 62,900 people in Hungary turned to their GP with a flu-like virus, the National Public Health Centre (NNK) said on Thursday. Fully 275,700 people complained of an acute respiratory infection between March 6 and 12, the centre said. Of those with a flu-like virus, 44.8% were below the age of 15, while 28.5% were 15-34. Fully 6.9% were 60 or above. Last week, 268 people were hospitalised with an acute respiratory infection, 44 of whom needed intensive care.

### **MORE GREEN AREAS TO BE ADDED TO CITY PARK**

The development of Budapest's City Park is continuing with the renewal of green areas as part of the Liget

project, the ministerial commissioner in charge of the programme said on Thursday. Since the parliamentary approval of the law on the Liget project ten years ago, several outdoor facilities have been opened to the public, including the Grand Playground, a sports centre, a 2km running circuit, sport fields and a promenade along Dózsa György Street, László Baán told a press conference. Under the project, more than 250,000sqms of green areas have been so far rejuvenated and 75,000sqms of concrete surfaces removed, he said. Baán noted that so far over 200,000 perennial plants, some 70,000 shrubs, 500 trees and 130 pine trees have been planted. Baán noted that in the past years, the renewed City Park, which includes the celebrated House of Music Hungary and the new Ethnographic Museum, has attracted 5 million visitors.

Benedek Györgyevics, the chief executive of the company managing the project, said that a 25,000sqm former driving test range has been greened over with more than 20,000 perennial plants and 5,600 shrubs planted. The area around the popular sight-seeing balloon will also be greened, along with the park area in between Kós Károly Esplanade and Hermina and Konrad Adenauer Roads, he said.

### **TIME MAGAZINE LISTS BUDAPEST AMONG WORLD'S GREATEST PLACES 2023**

Time magazine has included Budapest in its World's Greatest Places 2023 listing of recommended destinations. The weekly with a readership of 50 million notes that the Hungarian capital is celebrating this year the 150th anniversary of the unification of Buda, Pest and Óbuda, three one-time settlements along the River Danube, with 100 programmes. It notes that Chain Bridge will reopen to pedestrians in the autumn after more than two years of renovation and will have participants of the Budapest Marathon running next to and under the landmark bridge in October. Among other programmes in the autumn, Time lists the open-air jubilee concert to be held in Heroes' Square, the Cake of Budapest competition and a new exhibit on the identity of Budapest at the Budapest History Museum. It notes the opening of the all-new Ethnography Museum, the House of Music Hungary, designed by Japanese start architect Sou Fujimoto, and the Hungarian State Opera after a renovation project completed last year.