

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



President Katalin Novák with Leka, Crown Prince of Albania (l), and Mayor of Tirana Erion Veliaj (r)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Events marking Day of National Cohesion

Events related to the war in Ukraine

## TOP STORY

# ORBÁN: BRUSSELS WANTS AUSTERITY IN HUNGARY

Brussels is calling for austerity and proposing that Hungary “ruin its economy, people, families and pensioners”, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said on Friday.

In an interview with public radio, the prime minister said that Brussels did not want Hungary to take banks’ and corporations’ extra profits away, and wanted pensioners and families to have to pay full energy prices. “They’re asking for something that we’ve been fighting against for over 13 years,” Orbán said, underlining that the government was “fighting this fight with the support of an overwhelming majority of Hungarians”. Support for the government on this issue “greatly transcends political affiliations”, he said. Even a left-wing pensioner agrees that they do not want to pay 180,000 forints (EUR 485) more a month, but that is what would happen if Hungary did what Brussels wanted, Orbán said. Hungary must stand up for its own interests; it should accept the proposals that are good but reject everything that points towards austerity and make it clear that the drafting of the budget is a national competency, he said. When it comes to the budget, Hungary’s only two obligations to the EU concern the budget deficit and the public debt, the prime minister said.

## **ORBÁN: 'WE WILL PROTECT EVERYTHING IMPORTANT TO US IN 2024'**

"If there were no war, next year's budget would be a much happier one," Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told public radio on Friday, adding, however, that "we will protect all that is important for us in 2024 even despite the war". He said it was "the energy of war" that had caused inflation to rise, arguing that the war had driven up energy prices worldwide. He noted the government's commitment to push inflation into the single digits by the end of the year "no matter what", adding that it expected an average inflation rate of 6% next year. The 2024 budget targets a public debt below 70% of GDP and a falling deficit, he said, adding that fiscal discipline was vital in times of war. The prime minister said the government would not be able to promote economic growth unless inflation was reduced, expressing hope that inflation was currently below 22%. If there were no war and if the European Union and the West saw reason and admitted "that we're on the wrong path", and if there were a ceasefire and peace talks, the economic situation would suddenly improve and inflation would fall to between 1-3% at a much faster pace, Orbán said.

Meanwhile, Orbán said that Hungary could "sit back" if it had completed the expansion of the Paks nuclear power plant. But because of

the way Brussels has been holding things up at the initiative of the left, the project is behind schedule, he added. Orbán said the war had entered a "very brutal phase", adding that "when leftist politicians at home say that we're at war with Russia, they don't know what they're talking about, they've lost their minds."

"The statement 'we are at war with Russia' is one that no sane person would make since the second world war," Orbán said, referring to a recent comment by Budapest's mayor. He said the only morally acceptable position was to be pro-peace. "Hungary is not and will not be at war with Russia, certainly not as long as this government is in power, so it's observing the war more calmly and has a more realistic view of it," he added. Orbán said everything possible needed to be done before the start of Ukraine's counteroffensive to convince the warring sides of the need for a ceasefire and peace talks, because "otherwise we will lose a lot of lives".

## **ORBÁN: EUROPE WILL SOON ACCEPT 'HUNGARY'S PRO-PEACE STANCE'**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, in an interview with public radio on Friday, said that the time was close when "Europe accepts Hungary's pro-peace position". Orbán said Western leaders had "led themselves to believe that the war in Ukraine could be won through the Ukrainians fighting and the West supplying money and

weapons to such an extent that it will be very difficult to come off that war path". "But this is not our business; we are on the correct path morally and politically," Orbán said, adding that "in many Western states people will sooner or later enforce peace through elections and replace governments promoting war". The majority of Europeans do not support war, Orbán insisted, adding that "they may support Ukraine morally, since Ukraine has been attacked and Russia is the aggressor, and they want justice ... but they are divided over the question of what should be done and what can be undertaken".

"With a few exceptions everybody is against us in the European Union ... they have flown at our throat," Orbán said. "It is difficult to maintain a pro-peace stance in such a circle." He said it was obvious that "no better results could be achieved on the frontline than what Ukraine could have achieved before the war, through negotiations". Decision makers "are now approaching the question what purpose the war has had at all", he added. Answering a question on endeavours to isolate Hungary, Orbán said "if you are Hungarian you must stand your ground" because "whenever we did not fight for our position we always lost, losing our self-esteem, our confidence and feeling ashamed". "But now we have a national government and it will not happen ... there will always be left-wing hassle, such as the dispute around Hungary's EU presidency ... but

Hungary, wherever it can, must have a loyal cooperation with the other European countries, finding a balance between cooperation and national interests," he said.

### **ORBÁN: ERDOĞAN ELECTION LOSS WOULD HAVE BEEN 'TRAGEDY'**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told public radio on Friday that he had received the re-election of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as Türkiye's president with "great relief". He said he had "not only kept fingers crossed but prayed a lot" for his election victory. "It would have been tragedy had he not won," he said, insisting that if Erdoğan's opponent had won, "one, two, or three million refugees ... would have appeared at the Hungarian border before the end of this summer." Orbán also said Hungary received its Russian gas supplies through Türkiye, and that country having a "pro-American leader or one supported by George Soros" would make it "strongly doubtful if the gas could reach Hungary or Serbia". Erdoğan's losing the election would have "given Türkiye a pro-war president", the prime minister said, adding that "the ramifications would be unforeseeable". Erdoğan has a chance to mediate between Ukraine and Russia, as he earlier mediated over Ukraine's grain exports, Orbán said.

According to the prime minister, Hungary "must always watch Berlin, Moscow, and Ankara ... Hungary is in that triangle and it is in that triangle

where the life of Hungarians must be managed." He said "constellations are not equally good in those three relations but all three are stable, balanced, and could bring benefits to Hungary". He added, however, that currently relations with Germany were "the most critical".

### **ORBÁN HAILS STRENGTHENING HUNGARY-ITALY TIES**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on Friday sent his greetings to Giorgia Meloni, his Italian counterpart, to mark Italy's national holiday. A statement from Orbán's press chief quoted the prime minister as referring to Meloni as a "head of government knowing and understanding Hungary, and working to protect European Christian values", and welcoming their cooperation "aimed at resolving such extraordinary challenges as migration and the energy crisis". "Recent, high-level bilateral visits clearly indicate the rising intensity of our relations," Orbán said in his letter. He added that defence, the economy, and culture offered further areas of cooperation.

### **SZIJJÁRTÓ: FOREIGN INVESTORS' CONFIDENCE IN HUNGARY 'UNBROKEN DESPITE HYSTERICIS'**

The confidence of foreign investors in Hungary "seems to be unbroken" despite "all the attacks, emotional blackmail and hysteria-mongering",

helping Hungary maintain its economic growth, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said on Friday. Péter Szijjártó spoke at a project launch by Austria's plywood maker KRONOSPAN-MOFA, and said the group would increase its capacity at its plant in Mohacs, in southern Hungary, using a budget of 2 billion forints (EUR 5.4m). He added that the Hungarian government was supporting the project with a grant of 286 million forints, "helping to preserve 230 jobs". Szijjártó said Hungary had seen 6.5 billion euros in foreign investment last year, which he said was a "huge record". He added, however, that last year's record had been broken in the first half of 2023, while greenfield developments had shrunk by 15% elsewhere in the European Union. Concerning the wood processing industry, which employs 16,000 people in the country, he said it had also broken a record last year, increasing by 26% and its earnings nearing 600 billion forints. Austria is Hungary's third largest trading partner, with bilateral trade increasing by 37% in 2022, to a total turnover of a record 17 billion euros, the minister added.

### **AGMIN: HUNGARY-FRANCE TIES MUST BE FURTHER STRENGTHENED**

Hungary is dedicated to further strengthening Hungarian-French agricultural, political and trade relations, Minister of Agriculture István Nagy said on Thursday after

meeting French Ambassador Claire Legras. The ministry cited Nagy as saying that Hungary maintained good professional and agro-political ties with France. "The interests of Hungarian and French farmers coincide and France's opinion is always an important point of reference for us," the minister said. The sides at the meeting discussed the issue of Ukrainian grain exports, geographical indications for grapes and wine, ways to increase cooperation in agricultural training and the use of pesticides.

### **LMP URGES NO PARDON FOR 'TERRORISTS'**

The opposition LMP party has proposed that parliament adopt a political statement to ensure that "terrorists and other criminals jeopardising society's structure, unity, and security" are not granted a presidential pardon. Antal Csárdi, LMP's deputy group leader, told a press conference on Friday that President Katalin Novák had made a mistake when she pardoned György Budaházy and his accomplices. "No pardon should be granted to

people that will then pose a threat to Hungary," he insisted. Quoting the court decision under which Budaházy and his group had been sentenced on charges of terrorism and other crimes, Csárdi said "it was by mere chance that the group's activities had not taken lives". The convicts had set fire to the homes of public officials, and threw petrol bombs at two gay bars, Csárdi said, insisting that "nothing justified the president's pardon". Parliament should call on the president to grant her pardon in a way that "it does not cause great anxiety in society's everyday life", Csárdi said.

### **PROTEST HELD AGAINST TEACHERS' STATUS LAW**

A demonstration organised by the Tanítanéék (I want to teach) and noÁr movements was held at the Ministry of Interior on Thursday where participants protested against a bill on the legal status of teachers. József Attila Street was blocked by police during the event and traffic was diverted. The event was also attended by opposition Momentum lawmaker András Jámbor and former

leader of the opposition Socialists Ildikó Lendvai. Representatives of the United Students' Front said teachers, as well as police officers and doctors were earning "slave wages" while "criminals sit in parliament". They added "the regime could only be toppled by the people" and "no future without teachers". A participating young teacher said his salary was "enough to buy 500 litres of milk, which takes a cow 20 days to produce" adding that he also worked 20 days for the sum. Tanítanéék founder Katalin Törley said "the air is wearing thin: who knows when it runs out completely and there is an explosion?" adding: "To the trash heap with the status law!"

### **OVER 15,000 REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON THURSDAY**

Fully 5,958 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Thursday, while 9,158 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 63 people, ORFK said on Friday.