

PHOTO OF THE DAY



New Danube bridge linking Kalocsa and Paks under construction

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office reports on Oct industrial output, retail sales, commercial lodgings

Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Israel

TOP STORY

DEFMIN DISCUSSES MILITARY TIES IN TEL AVIV

Hungary stands by its allies in difficult times, Defence Minister Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said after meeting his Israeli counterpart, Yoav Gallant, in Tel Aviv on Tuesday.

According to a ministry statement, Szalay-Bobrovniczky said the purpose of his meeting was to personally express the Hungarian government's solidarity with the Jewish state following October's terrorist attack by Hamas. "We have supported and will continue to support Israel's right to self-defence at every forum," the minister said. Szalay-Bobrovniczky said he and Gallant had discussed bilateral military ties and defence industry cooperation in addition to current security and defence policy matters. The meeting was also attended by executives of defence industry firms ELBIT, RAFAEL and IAI. During the visit, Hungary and Israel signed a memorandum of understanding on military cooperation. Szalay-Bobrovniczky noted Israel's role in bolstering Hungary's air defences by supplying components of the Iron Dome missile defence system. These, together with the US-Norwegian Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAMS), make up Hungary's 21st-century high-tech air defence system, the minister said.

ORBÁN HOLDS TALKS WITH CZECHIA'S BABIŠ

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, the leader of Hungary's ruling Fidesz party, held talks with former Czech premier Andrej Babiš, the head of the opposition ANO party, in Budapest on Tuesday, the PM's press chief said. The two leaders discussed topical issues concerning the European Union and central Europe, Bertalan Havasi said. They also talked about inter-party matters, as they both lead political groups that attach prime importance to policies aimed at protecting national sovereignty, he said.

GOVT OFFICIAL: EP STILL FOR PRO-MIGRATION PROPOSALS

The European Parliament has continued to submit pro-migration proposals to the migration pact with the aim to include in it an increasing number of exemptions on whom to grant easier entry to the territory of the European Union, the interior ministry's state secretary said in Brussels on Tuesday. Speaking at a press conference after a meeting of EU interior ministers, Bence Rétvári said coordination talks on the migration draft continued between the European Commission, the Council and the EP. "The EU's law-making body tries to soften up and make the draft more migrant-friendly and the European Commission wants to push it through

before the European Parliament elections at all cost," Rétvári said.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER: DEVELOPMENT FUNDS USEFUL FOR HUNGARY, BOOST EU COMPETITIVENESS

The resources Hungary used to fund schemes boosting environmental standards and energy efficiency, some 1,400 billion forints (EUR 3.7bn), have also aided the European Union's competitiveness, the regional development minister said on Tuesday. Speaking at the closing event of the KEHOP operative programme for environmental and energy development in Kecskemét, in central Hungary, Tibor Navracsics said cooperation between the European Commission and the Hungarian government had been successful. He said Hungary was expected to be ranked as one of the member states best at utilising EU funds in the 2014-2020 financial cycle.

PRESIDENT MEETS ETHNIC HUNGARIANS IN SLOVENIA'S PREKMURJE REGION

President Katalin Novák met members of the ethnic Hungarian community of Slovenia's Prekmurje (Muravidék) region at the Dobrovník (Dobronak) cultural centre on Tuesday. Novák took part in a moderated discussion with Slovenian counterpart Nataša

Pirc Musar, covering topics such as the situation of minorities and the United Nations recent COP28 climate summit she attended and addressed. She said that as Hungary's president she considered it a responsibility to represent all Hungarians, including ethnic kin beyond the borders and members of the diaspora. She welcomed that ethnic Hungarians in Prekmurje were living in harmony with the majority population. The president said Hungarian companies and economic players in Slovenia enjoyed support, adding that Hungarians in the country were seen as assets that contributed to the economy rather than as enemies. She noted that ethnic Hungarians in western Ukraine's Transcarpathia region, however, faced the threats of the ongoing war and had to fight for their minority rights and Hungarian identity. As regards the COP28 summit, Novák said she had spoken about how the family was not the problem was the solution to climate change. She said discouraging young people from having families was seen by many as a means of fighting climate change, adding that they should instead be encouraged to have children.

Pirc Musar said Slovenia and Hungary could both serve as role models in the handling of minority issues. She said she kept up with the lives of Slovenes living beyond the border and was always told by Slovenes in Hungary they had few problems. Prior to their discussion, the two heads of state inspected

the renovated areas of the bilingual secondary school in Lendava (Lendva) and visited the Early Intervention Centre in Radmožanci (Radamos). Hungarian kindergartens in Prekmurje received 316 million forints (EUR 832,000) in support from the Hungarian government as part of a Carpathian Basin kindergarten development scheme.

PISA STUDY: HUNGARIAN STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE STAYS LEVEL AS OECD AVERAGE FALLS

The latest PISA study showed no significant change in Hungarian students' reading and mathematics skills compared with the previous, 2018 results, even as the performance of other OECD countries fell, the head of the Hungarian Education Office (OH) said. The 2022 PISA study, released on Tuesday, showed the results of tests from 81 countries, Sándor Brassói said. The reading, mathematics and science skills of 15-year-olds fell sharply in countries long considered as having exemplary education systems such as Iceland, Norway, the Netherlands and Finland, he said. Meanwhile, Hungary maintained -- and slightly improved -- those skills despite the pandemic and the difficult economic situation, Brassói said. Students have taken the transfer to digital education in stride, and the number of weak-performing students fell slightly, he added.

Gábor Kristóf Velkey, the head of public education analysis at OH, said

the 2022 survey had seen the most participants so far, 37 OECD members and 44 partner states. In Hungary, 6,198 students of 270 public education institutes completed the tests, he added. In maths, Hungarian students scored an average of 473 points, compared with the OECD average of 472 points, Velkey said. The OECD average in science was 485 points, and Hungarians scored an average of 486; in reading, the OECD average was 476 points, and the Hungarian 473 points, he said. Velkey noted that the study places individual results of proficiency levels to indicate larger-scale trends. The EU's goal is to push the ratio of the students not reaching proficiency level 2 below 15%. In maths, 68.9% of students reached that level on average, while 70.5% of Hungarian students did so, Velkey said. In reading, 73.7% of children reached proficiency level 2 on average, and 74.1% in Hungary. In science, the same ratio was 75.5% in OECD countries and 77.1% in Hungary.

Hungary also scored above average considering its GDP-per-capita ratio, Brassói added. Further, 81% of Hungarian children said they made friends easily and that they felt they belonged to a community, compared with 76% on average, he said. The general satisfaction of children with their lives fell since the last study, with 18% now saying they were dissatisfied with their lives, up from 16% in 2018, Brassói said. In Hungary, the same indicator fell from 16% in 2018 to 13% in 2022, he said. The number of children who said they felt unsafe on their way

to school or in the classroom was 7% and 5%, respectively, a few points below the OECD average, he added.

MINISTER HIGHLIGHTS 'FIRM COMMITMENT' TO NATIONAL MINORITIES' SELF-DETERMINATION

The Hungarian state "unwaveringly supports the cultural and all other kinds of self-determination" of its national minorities, the minister of culture and innovation said in his annual hearing before parliament's national minorities committee on Tuesday. The Hungarian government has "very good connections" with both the representatives of ethnic minorities in Hungary and with their mother countries, too, János Csák said. With the exception of Ukraine, all those countries are EU members, which offers educational and cultural opportunities, he said, urging those countries to contribute to the cultural lives of their minorities in Hungary. The minister said a new system of cultural regulations would be prepared and submitted for social consultations in the spring. He added that the draft would be discussed with national minority representatives, too, before it is submitted to parliament. He pledged that the new rules would create a "simple, unified, and transparent system".

Concerning the Erasmus and Horizon European higher education programmes, Csák said the EU had laid "legally unfounded claims" against

Hungary, but added that open issues around the schemes could be settled with the EU in the first quarter of next year. Apart from the two European programmes, the government has set up its Pannonia Programme to promote the mobility of teachers and students with a budget of 10 billion forints (EUR 26.3m), the minister said.

PROJECT TO EXTEND PAKS NUCLEAR PLANT'S LIFESPAN STARTS

MVM Paksi Atomerőmű, the company running the Paks nuclear plant, has announced the extension of the plant's lifespan to the European Union, company head Péter János Horváth said on Tuesday. The October announcement was the first step in a decade-long process that would prolong the plant's operating licence until 2052-57, he said. The two already operating blocks of the plant went online between 1982 and 1987, he said. Their lifespan was extended once already, until 2032-37. Nuclear energy and sustainable resources are both key to a secure energy supply, he told a press conference ahead of the tour of parts of the plant for journalists. Hungary's electricity demand is expected to grow by 150% by 2030, he said. While the Russian supplier of the plant has been a reliable partner for four decades, Horváth said the plant was looking into ways to diversify its supply lines.

Deputy Director Pál Tóth said the extension would require

the completion of some 250 reconstruction projects, half of which are expected to cost more than one billion forints (EUR 2.6m). Revamping the electric and control systems would be in the 1.5-billion-euro range, he said. Mihály Czibula, the leader of the extension project, said the implementation plan are expected to be submitted in 2028.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: LG, MAGNA INVESTMENT TO CREATE 200 JOBS IN NE HUNGARY

A consortium of South Korea's LG and Canada's Magna is investing 20 billion forints (EUR 52.7m) in building its first European plant turning out parts for electric cars, in Miskolc, in north-east Hungary, the foreign minister said in Budapest on Tuesday. According to a ministry statement, Péter Szijjártó said production is slated to start in 2025 at the plant which is creating 200 jobs, and the government is supporting the project with a 6.2 billion forint grant, Szijjártó said. Hungary's economy is expected to hit new records this year, with investment volume doubling to 13 billion euros and exports growing by 6-8% to 150 billion euros, he said. Car manufacturing, which makes up 30% of Hungary's industrial output, is key to that performance, he added. Since vehicles are the source of some 20% of all emissions, realistic climate protection goals are also impossible without curbing them, he said.

Hungary's automotive exports have grown 3.5-fold in the past decade,

last year surpassing 12,000 billion forints, he said. This year, the sector's performance grew by 18% in the first 11 months, he said.

COCA-COLA INAUGURATES HUF 8.7 BN EXPANSION NEAR BUDAPEST

Coca-Cola HBC Magyarország inaugurated an 8.7 billion forint (EUR 23m) expansion at its bottling plant in Dunaharaszti, on the outskirts of Budapest, on Tuesday. The 3,000sqm addition will boost capacity at the soft drink maker's base by 30%, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said at the ceremony. The state supported the investment with 740 million forints, Péter Szijjártó said. US-owned Coca-Cola HBC Magyarország buys two-thirds of its feedstock from local suppliers and exports its products to 17 countries, he noted. US companies form the second largest community of foreign investors in Hungary, the foreign minister said. Their investments last year reached over a record 8 billion dollars, he said, adding that with an 11% increase, a new record was expected to be set this year.

JAPAN'S TDK ANNOUNCES HUF 3.5 BN INVESTMENT IN W HUNGARY

Appliances and electronics company TDK Hungary Components is investing 3.5 billion forints (EUR 9.2m), which comes with a 1.5 billion forint government grant, at a plant

in Szombathely, in western Hungary, the company announced on Tuesday. Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, welcomed the announcement, saying the project is receiving funds from a government scheme aimed at saving businesses. In a speech, Szijjártó highlighted the Hungarian economy's "huge achievements even during the black years of the global economy". He noted last year's record investments, exports and employment, adding that new records were expected in all three areas in 2023.

Japanese companies currently make up Hungary's 9th largest investment community, employing nearly 40,000 people, Szijjártó said. Bilateral trade was worth 2.5 billion euros last year, showing a 23% increase in the first 9 months of the year, he added. TDK Hungary will deploy a heat pump system and solar panels at its Szombathely plant.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY CAR INDUSTRY INNOVATIVE, HIGH-TECH

Hungary's automotive industry has become innovative and uses cutting-edge technology, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said at the announcement of a capacity expansion at wheel rim maker Howmet-Köfém in Szekesfehervar, in central Hungary. The US-owned company is investing 17 billion forints (EUR 44.8m) to expand production capacity, Szijjártó said on Tuesday.

The government is supporting the investment, which will create 80 jobs, with a 5 billion forint grant, he added. The US has been a key player in Hungary's economic performance in recent years, Szijjártó said. Trade volume between the two countries reached a record 8 billion dollars last year, and has grown by a further 11% this year, he said.

MORE THAN 7,000 UKRAINIAN CITIZENS ENTER HUNGARY ON MONDAY

Fully 4,248 Ukrainian citizens entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Monday, while 3,254 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 64 people, ORFK said on Tuesday.

MAYOR: BUDAPEST 'NOT A SOULLESS CITY'

Budapest is "not a soulless city", as it was founded on and is kept going by solidarity, Mayor Gergely Karácsony said on Tuesday at the launch of the Santa Claus trolley bus in City Hall park. Speaking about the Hungarian Baptist Aid's "shoebox" initiative aimed at collecting boxfuls of Christmas presents for poor children, Karácsony said the charity drive was "the most beautiful way to express this solidarity". Hungarian Baptist Aid head Dávid Gál said the initiative aimed to set

a new record by collecting at least 70,000 boxes. In the 20th year of the scheme, the organisers expect home-made gifts to arrive by Dec 18, Gál said, adding that people could also put together shoeboxes online at ciposdoboz.hu. Karácsony urged the public to "break the record of love" in collecting presents for the needy.

EXPERTS: ORGAN TRANSPLANTS BACK TO PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS IN HUNGARY

After a decline during Covid, the number of organ transplants is returning to pre-pandemic levels in Hungary, health experts said in a joint statement on Tuesday. The first organ transplant, a live kidney transplant, was performed in the country in December 1962 in Szeged and the 12,000th in May this year at the Debrecen University. Out of all transplants, 9,625 were kidney, 1,277 liver, 722 heart, 196 pancreas-kidney combined and 129 were lung transplants, according to the statement. It said that last year a total of 369 organ transplants were performed in the seven transplant centres at four Hungarian universities. Until December 1 this year, 246 kidney, 62 liver, 48 heart, 10 lung and 9 kidney-pancreas combined transplants have been conducted, the statement said.

Over the past two decades, with the exception of the pandemic period, access to organs offered by donors has significantly improved due to the technical background and

tasking, Sándor Mihály, the director of transplants at the National Blood Transfusion Service (OVSZ) said in the statement. Hungary's joining the international organisation Eurotransplant ten years ago has increased the access of patients with acute illness to an organ donated mostly from abroad within a lot shorter period of time, he said. Mihály said that as a member of Eurotransplant, Hungary can now include 39% more patients on a waiting list. According to OVSZ's data, over the past decade 929 organs have been received by Hungarian patients from abroad. Most of the patients needing organ transplant are waiting for a kidney to be donated. The average waiting time is the shortest for a liver, nine months, whereas it is 3.82 years for a kidney, according to OVSZ.

HUNGARY FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY ORDERS CONTROL OVER IMPORTED CATTLE

Hungary's National Food Chain Safety Authority (Nébih) has ordered

the monitoring of cattle imported to Hungary after reports from the Netherlands, Germany, and Belgium of cases of bluetongue disease. Nébih noted on its website that the disease had caused an epidemic in the Netherlands in September, then it spread across the German and Belgian borders in October.

Controls focused on 59 shipments of 3,800 cattle arriving in Hungary since July, the authority said, adding that there were only 1,150 animals in the country at the time of the restrictions, the rest having been exported on to third countries. So far, 15 samples of a total 1,700 have been returned positive, the authority said, adding that "though these cattle pose no danger of infection ... prevention such as eliminating insects that spread the virus as well as strict observation of quarantine rules are essential in preserving Hungary's bluetongue-free status." The authority also said no cattle, sheep, or goat imports had arrived in Hungary since the introduction of restrictions, adding that mosquitoes that spread the disease were no longer active in the

cold weather. But the authority has asked farmers to exercise extreme caution when buying stock for the countries affected.

POLICE SEIZE 154 KG OF COCAINE IN S BUDAPEST

The Budapest police (BRFK) seized over 154 kilograms of cocaine, with a street value of more than 23 billion forints (EUR 60.6m), at a depot in a southern suburb of Budapest. According to the police website, the highly pure cocaine was found in a container at the harbour on Csepel island. The amount at a concentration sold on the street would be "sufficient for a dose for every other resident of Budapest..." the website said. BRFK's inspectors have launched an investigation and contacted several foreign agencies including the US Drug Enforcement Administration, the website said. In comparison to the massive haul, since the start of the year, police had seized 2.8kg of cocaine, 4.6kg of amphetamines and 76.2kg of marijuana.