

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



2023 Nobel laureates Katalin Karikó and Ferenc Krausz at a ceremony at the Hungarian embassy in Stockholm

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**EP plenary session in Strasbourg**

**EU foreign ministers meet in Brussels**

**Hungary parl't meets**

**Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Israel**

## TOP STORY

# ORBÁN DISCUSSES FIGHT AGAINST LEFTIST FORCES WITH NEW ARGENTINIAN PRESIDENT

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán met Javier Milei, Argentina's new president, for bilateral talks in Buenos Aires late on Saturday, the prime minister's press chief said.

The talks focused on political cooperation "in the interest of more effective fight against international leftist forces" as well as opportunities to further developing bilateral ties, Bertalan Havasi said in a statement. Orbán congratulated Milei on his election victory and invited him to pay an official visit to Hungary.

Earlier on Saturday, the prime minister held talks with former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro in the Argentinian capital. Their talks focused on the international cooperation of conservative parties, Havasi told MTI. Orbán wished Bolsonaro much success in the Brazilian municipal elections next year while the former president wished Orbán success in the upcoming EP and Hungarian local elections. Meanwhile, Orbán held bilateral talks with Santiago Abascal, the head of Spain's VOX party. The talks focused on cooperation ahead of next year's EP elections and efforts to protect national sovereignty. The Hungarian prime minister also met Argentinian members of the International Catholic Lawmakers' Network (ICLN).

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## **KARIKÓ, KRAUSZ PRESENTED NOBEL PRIZE AT CEREMONY**

Hungary's biochemist Katalin Karikó and physicist Ferenc Krausz were presented the Nobel Prize by Swedish King Karl Gustaf XVI, at a ceremony in Stockholm on Sunday afternoon. Karikó and her research partner Drew Weissman have won the 2023 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. The Nobel Assembly acknowledged the researchers "for their discoveries concerning nucleoside base modifications that enabled the development of effective mRNA vaccines against COVID-19". Krausz has won together with his French colleagues Pierre Agostini and Anne L'Huillier the 2023 Nobel Prize in Physics. The three physicists were recognised "for experimental methods that generate attosecond pulses of light for the study of electron dynamics in matter".

On behalf of the Nobel Foundation, Astrid Söderbergh Widding, the head of the foundation's board, said Alfred Nobel's message to highlight that achievements to advance literature, science, and the cause of peace would advance the whole world. Respect for knowledge and cooperation at the international level is key, she added. At a time when science, culture, and civil society face challenges, focusing on Nobel's vision is extremely important, she said. "Fate does not determine the world's development;

we also have strength and power to influence our own fate and give the world momentum," she said.

The ceremony was attended by 1,560 guests including family members of the awardees, earlier Nobel laureates, members of the Swedish royal family, as well as government members and MPs of Sweden, and diplomats.

## **FINMIN: ECOFIN APPROVES RELEASE OF EU FUNDS TO HUNGARY**

European Union finance ministers have approved Hungary's amended Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) plan, clearing another obstacle to the release of funds Hungary is entitled to, the finance minister said in Brussels on Friday.

Mihály Varga told Hungarian journalists after an Ecofin meeting that this meant Hungary will get 3.9 billion euros of RRF loans and 0.7 billion euros of REPowerEU grants on top of a 5.8 billion euro grant. Ecofin's approval means that Hungary could receive an advance of 920 million euros in funding as early as January, Varga said. He noted that the government had decided to allocate the RRF loans towards green transition investments, which 67.1% of the programme would be geared towards. The minister expressed hope that Hungary will soon also gain access to the cohesion and recovery funds, saying the country had met every condition. Meanwhile, Varga

said the Spanish presidency of the Council of the EU could not reach a compromise on the reform of the bloc's economic governance. Hungary has always held the stance that it is national governments, and not the European Commission, who should be given more authority when it comes to fiscal policy. He noted that Hungary had earlier proposed that a special set of regulations should be established for defence spending according to which extra spending on defence would not count towards the Maastricht deficit criteria. This, he added, had been incorporated into the planned economic governance reform package, demonstrating the government's strong ability to enforce its interests.

## **MENCZER: NEW UKRAINE LAW 'FAR FROM RESTORING 2015 RIGHTS'**

The Hungarian government will "thoroughly examine" legislation passed by Ukraine's parliament on Friday, but "it is already clear that the law is far from restoring the 2015 rights" of the Hungarian minority, Tamás Menczer, the foreign affairs state secretary, said on Facebook. The Hungarian government will monitor implementation of the new law, Menczer said. Late on Friday, the Ukrainian parliament adopted a law on ethnic minorities aimed to restore their earlier rights in a number of areas, with the exception of ethnic Russians.

## **GULYÁS: STRONG HUNGARIAN REPRESENTATION IN SERBIA IMPORTANT FOR HUNGARY-SERBIA TIES**

Paying a visit to Zrenjanin (Nagybecskerek) in Serbia's northernmost Vojvodina region, the head of the Prime Minister's Office called strong representation of Vojvodina Hungarians on a national level important for maintaining good relations between Hungary and Serbia. The Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) has always played an important role in building good relations between Hungary and Serbia as well as between Hungary and Vojvodina Hungarians, Gergely Gulyás told a local forum. He welcomed that VMSZ's local supporters had attended the forum in large numbers which he said illustrated that they were aware of the December 17 parliamentary elections' importance for the Hungarian community. Gulyás noted that in Hungary's general election last spring, 68,000 Vojvodina Hungarians casting their ballots "contributed with their votes to the victory of the ruling Fidesz-Christian Democrat alliance".

Speaking about the pressure posed by illegal migration, Gulyás underscored Hungary's efforts to stop illegal immigrants, calling for criticism on Serbia's part of Brussels' approach to the issue. "In Serbia, VMSZ has been the one that has spoken out against [Brussel's stance on] migration and is regarded by the Hungarian government as a reliable partner on the matter," he said.

## **DÖMÖTÖR: UKRAINE'S EU ACCESSION '70,000 BILLION FORINT ISSUE'**

Ukraine's EU integration "is a 70,000 billion forint issue", yet "Brussels would make a decision with unprecedented speed and without giving sufficient information", a state secretary of the prime minister's cabinet office told public radio on Sunday. Csaba Dömötör said it was not clear "why some decision makers and out of what expectations would they want to see Ukraine in the EU before other countries having a candidate status for decades." "The most serious questions are yet to be answered," he added. Referring to press reports based on a leaked document Dömötör said Ukraine's full membership would involve the EU giving 186 billion euros to that country while "Europe has already been Ukraine's greatest financier". The EU "fails to provide an official answer as to how Ukraine's membership would impact the peoples of each member state," Dömötör insisted, adding that the leaked document suggested that "most countries now receiving subsidies from the EU would become net contributors." As a member, Ukraine would be the EU's largest agricultural producer and each country would see 20% less direct agricultural subsidies, he said. Dömötör insisted that Ukraine's accession would serve the interests of large Ukrainian agricultural companies "often owned

by businesses overseas" rather than the interests of European farmers. It has not been clarified what compensation European farmers, whose situation will become "extremely difficult", would receive, the state secretary said.

## **CHAD PRESIDENT WELCOMES HUNGARY ROLE IN AFRICA**

Mahamat Déby, the president of Chad, met Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó and applauded Hungary for its role played in Africa, the foreign ministry's spokesman said. At the meeting, Déby reassured Szijjártó of the support of Chad's leadership to the comprehensive bilateral cooperation programme covering several strategic areas, Máté Paczolay told MTI. Under the agreements signed during the Hungarian foreign minister's three-day visit, the two countries will start economic, humanitarian, educational and security cooperation, he said. Africa's development, peace and stability is in Europe's and in Hungary's primary interest, Szijjártó told the president, adding that this was why the Hungarian government sought close cooperation with countries that played a key role in the African continent's stability and those taking up fighting terrorist groups. The foreign minister reassured Déby that Hungarian companies were ready to invest in projects ensuring safe water supplies in Chad and in the modernisation of the country's agricultural sector. In the framework of humanitarian

cooperation, Hungary will participate in upgrading refugee camps, Paczolay said. In education, Hungary will offer scholarships to 25 Chadian students to study at Hungarian universities each year, while the Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences in Gödöllő will launch a training programme in Chad, the spokesman added.

### **JUSTMIN: MEDIA MUST STAND ITS GROUND IN FAST-CHANGING WORLD**

The media and journalism today have to stand their ground in a fast-changing world, Justice Minister Bence Tuzson said at the third Carpathian Basin Hungarian Media Conference in Visegrád, in northern Hungary, on Friday, adding that this was “an incredible responsibility and task”. In his speech, Tuzson said it was crucial to be able to distinguish between what is or is not important and what is or is not real and convey it to the audience. He called for quality communication that reflected reality. The minister said the aim of the conference was to determine how Hungarians and Hungarian journalists can give the right response to challenges in the fields of the media and the law. Tuzson said the generational communication gap had perhaps never been as large as it is today. He said the first time he had been elected MP in 2014 had been to the first parliament that also had a mandate from Hungarians beyond the border. This, he added, presented an

obligation to the Hungarian parliament and the government. “Hungary’s prime minister is no longer prime minister of a country enclosed by borders, but the prime minister of all Hungarians,” Tuzson said. He said this meant that the government had an obligation to implement every measure bearing in mind that it affects all Hungarians.

### **DEFMIN: HUNGARY COMMITTED TO VISEGRAD COOPERATION**

Hungary is committed to the cooperation of the Visegrad Group and supports the EU integration of the Western Balkan countries, the defence minister said on Friday, after a meeting of the four countries’ defence ministers in Prague.

At a joint press conference with Jana Černochová, his Czech counterpart, Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said their meeting went to show that despite a difference of opinion at times “we are in agreement on the important matters”.

At the meeting, Hungary took over the presidency of the Central European Defence Cooperation (CEDC) from Czechia. In connection with the Hungarian presidency starting in January, Szalay-Bobrovniczky said it would be built on the Czech presidency’s results and would continue the initiatives that presidency launched. “Central Europe’s security is linked to the stability of the Western Balkans, the Hungarian CEDC will therefore put great emphasis on

broadening high-level dialogue and practical cooperation between the two country groups as well as on promoting the EU integration of the Western Balkan countries,” said Szalay-Bobrovniczky. Concerning the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the defence minister reiterated that Hungary supported a ceasefire, talks and peace. He said that the conflict had “no military solution” and suggested that the EU should revisit its Ukraine strategy.

### **LANTOS: HUNGARY TO MEET 2030 CLIMATE TARGETS EARLIER**

Hungary has “done its homework” and could meet its climate targets earlier than 2030, Csaba Lantos, the energy minister, told the United Nations’ 28th climate conference in Dubai on Saturday. The energy ministry quoted Lantos in a statement as highlighting Hungary’s significantly reducing its emissions while maintaining economic growth. Hungary has reduced its greenhouse emissions by 37% since 1990, and is planning a 40% reduction by 2030. The government has now proposed to increase the reduction to 50% by the target year, the ministry’s statement said. Hungary is also planning to increase the ratio of green energy to 21% by 2030, but its new strategy, now awaiting EU approval, has increased that target to 29%, the ministry added. The Hungarian government “is taking firm and effective measures aimed at adapting to climate change and

mitigating its harmful effects”, Lantos said, but added that “successful action is only possible within international cooperation ... Making requirements more and more stringent will only have a point if all participants can meet their commitments”. The minister also noted that over two-thirds of the EU funding Hungary is to receive under its national recovery plan had been earmarked for measures serving domestic climate targets and green transition.

### **MEDIA AUTHORITY: FH REPORT ON HUNGARY INTERNET FREEDOM 'ONE-SIDED, HAS METHODOLOGICAL SHORTCOMINGS'**

Freedom House's latest report on internet freedom in Hungary shows similar “one-sidedness and methodological shortcomings” seen in recent years, Hungary's media authority NMHH said on Friday. The authority said it had carried out an analysis of Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2023 report with a view to providing feedback and assisting the objective evaluation of the issues being examined. It said the report reflected methodological shortcomings and contained inaccuracies. NMHH said Hungary's unchanged score of 69 of 100 and “partly free” status had once again been based on the evaluation of a single staff member of the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union

TASZ, who was also the author of the report on Hungary. NMHH said that despite the acknowledgments in connection with internet access, net neutrality and opportunities for entry to the telecommunications market, the sources cited in the report were those that were “biased in their criticism” in connection with the state of the media landscape in Hungary. It added that the report presented unsupported subjective opinions while failing to present opposing views. NMHH also criticised the report for covering events in connection with media diversity that fall outside the period of June 2022-May 2023, such as the temporary closure of the Magyar Nemzet daily in 2018. It said the sources cited were often outdated, such as a 2007 document referenced in connection with internet access among various parts of society. The report, NMHH added, contained several inaccuracies requiring correction, such as assertions regarding the media authority's independence.

### **FINMIN: S+P AFFIRMS HUNGARY INVESTMENT GRADE RATING**

S+P Global Ratings has affirmed Hungary's investment grade rating in spite of the war and the energy crisis caused by sanctions policies, the Finance Ministry said on Friday. S+P affirmed Hungary's ‘BBB-’ sovereign rating with a stable outlook, showing credit rating agencies' continued

confidence in the Hungarian economy, the ministry said. S+P delivered a positive assessment of the fast reduction of inflation, the stabilisation of the forint and the improvement of the current account balance, it added. The rating agency also noted that the government had access to a “broad array” of financing, including a stable domestic banking sector, retail securities and issues on international markets, the ministry said. S+P pointed to risks related to Hungary's energy vulnerability, but acknowledged diversification efforts, the ministry said. It also put political debates with the European Commission among challenges Hungary faces, but its analysts expect the start of transfers of EU funding soon, the ministry added.

### **AG CHAMBER HEAD: UKRAINE'S EU ENTRY WOULD BRING 'DRASTIC CHANGES' FOR HUNGARIAN FARM SECTOR**

Ukraine's EU accession would bring with it “drastic changes” for Hungary's agriculture sector, the head of the National Agriculture Chamber (NAK) said on Friday. Balázs Györffy told MTI that the addition of an agricultural area equalling roughly a third of the EU's territory would fundamentally upset the current farming support and food security system. Ukraine today is in no way fit to join the EU, Györffy said, adding that it was impossible



to predict the consequences of the country's EU membership for the European and Hungarian farm sectors. Győrffy said Ukraine could not even meet the criteria set for EU farmers and food producers. He said that Ukraine potentially not having to meet those conditions or adhere to the relevant laws would distort competition in the sector. He said the suggestion that Ukraine could be admitted to the EU through a simplified accession process was unfair to the countries that had been striving to meet the bloc's strict criteria for several years or even decades. Referring to the Balkans, Győrffy said those countries had been making strenuous efforts to fulfil the criteria set by Brussels. "Applying different rules of procedure and principles to the accession of certain member states would destroy the credibility of the functioning of the EU," he said.

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### **AGRMIN OFFICIAL: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IMPROVES ON 180,000 HECTARES UNDER KEHOP**

Natural environment quality has improved on 180,000 hectares in Hungary with the help of 101 projects supported with some 39 billion forints (EUR 102m) worth of funding under the EU's the KEHOP operative programme for environmental and energy development, the agriculture ministry's state secretary for nature protection said on Friday. Utilisation of funds under the framework's current cycle coming to a close has been 107.5%, András Rácz said, adding that two-thirds of the projects were aimed at the rehabilitation of habitat and the rest at the rehabilitation of wetland.

He noted that over 21% of Hungary's territory, 2 million hectares, is protected Natura 2000 area and more than 9%,

about 850,000 hectares, is a protected natural area of national importance. "This is a good ratio compared with other European countries, but continued intervention is still required since those areas are fragmented," said Rácz. Hungary's national parks attract on average 1.6 million visitors per year, 500,000 of whom visit sites with caves, Rácz said. The country has two Global Geoparks listed by UNESCO and 4,000 caves, he said.

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### **NEARLY 10,000 UKRAINIAN CITIZENS ENTER HUNGARY ON SATURDAY**

Fully 5,490 Ukrainian citizens entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Saturday, while 4,453 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 Sunday.