

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and PM Viktor Orbán meet in Budapest

## UPCOMING EVENTS

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

**Monetary Council holds rate-setting meeting**

## TOP STORY

### ‘WINNERS TOGETHER IN 21ST CENTURY’

The “grand plan” is for Turks and Hungarians to be “winners together in the 21st century”, Viktor Orbán said after signing a bilateral priority strategic partnership agreement with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

“In the language of diplomacy, this expresses the strongest possible friendly, brotherly and political cooperation,” Prime Minister Orbán told a press conference after the agreement was signed. He said that although Hungarians had “lost the previous century”, the plan now was to “win the 21st century”, for which Hungary was seeking allies. “That is what this priority strategic status is about,” he said, adding that Hungary and Türkiye wanted to work as closely together as the two peoples and countries possibly could. Orbán said this was “a serious commitment” made in the hope that what had been laid out in the Turkish president’s programme, “namely that the next one hundred years will belong to Türkiye”, would come true. He said Hungary would do everything it could during its presidency of the Council of the European Union next year to revamp the customs union between the EU and Türkiye as well as supporting Türkiye on the issue of visa liberalisation.

## **HUNGARY, TÜRKİYE SIGN BILATERAL AGREEMENTS**

Hungary and Türkiye have doubled their bilateral trade turnover in the space of just over ten years, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said after signing a bilateral priority strategic partnership agreement with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Orbán noted that 500 Turkish businesses are present in Hungary, while 100 Hungarian firms are active in Türkiye. Turkish investments in Hungary are growing in both number and value, he said. Since these investments have expanded to new sectors, he added, Hungary and Türkiye also signed agreements on railway developments and the defence industry. Orbán emphasised Türkiye's role in Hungary's general security and energy security, saying Hungary would be unable to keep migration at bay without Türkiye.

Concerning the war in Ukraine, the prime minister said Türkiye had been the only country to achieve any results in connection with peace and grain shipments. Türkiye, he noted, had also just taken command of the KFOR mission in Kosovo, where 465 Hungarian troops are stationed. As regards energy security, Orbán said he and Erdoğan agreed on Hungary purchasing natural gas directly from Türkiye in addition to receiving gas delivered through the country. Hungary and Türkiye are also developing ties between their universities, Orbán said, noting that

Hungary has offered 200 scholarships to Turkish university students. Next year, he added, will be dedicated to the joint Hungarian-Turkish cultural season to mark the centenary of the two countries' diplomatic ties. Orbán added that 2025 will be declared the year of cooperation in Hungarian science and innovation.

The short-term bilateral programme "is specific", while the medium-term programmes "are appealing", the prime minister said, adding that when it came to strategic and historic issues, the two countries had the same goals and intent. Hungary and Türkiye were elevating bilateral ties to an all-time high, he said.

Turkish President Erdoğan praised Türkiye and Hungary's long-standing friendly ties, saying both countries were willing to expand bilateral relations. He highlighted the "very strong" historical and cultural links between the two countries, expressing his appreciation for Hungary's presence in the Organization of Turkic States as an observer. Türkiye and Hungary, he said, aimed to stimulate investments in each other's countries along with joint investments in third countries, and sought to further deepen their cooperation in the defence and energy industries. Erdoğan expressed his country's support for Hungary's successful EU presidency in the second half of 2024. Meanwhile, the Turkish president said violence did not yield solutions, noting that Türkiye was focused on a diplomatic solution to the war in

Ukraine, and he urged a ceasefire in Gaza.

Erdoğan, who is visiting Hungary to attend a meeting of the Hungarian-Turkish High-level Strategic Cooperation Council, signed a joint political declaration with Orbán on the two countries' priority strategic partnership. Also, Hungarian and Turkish ministers signed cooperation agreements on social services, the Hungarian-Turkish year of innovation, research and development, defence and foreign affairs, nuclear energy, civilian state of emergency as well as audiovisual political and government communication, among other areas. Hungary and Türkiye are launching a year-long Hungarian-Turkish cultural season on Monday to mark the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye as well as their diplomatic relations.

## **PRESIDENT'S OFFICE: TÜRKİYE 'KEY FOR HUNGARY'**

President Katalin Novák received Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, her Turkish counterpart, with military honours at Heroes' Square in Budapest on Monday morning, the Presidential Office said. Novák and Erdoğan held a tête-à-tête at Sándor Palace. She said Türkiye was key for Hungary in preventing illegal migration and providing energy security, as well as playing an important role in the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East. Regarding NATO, the two presidents

discussed challenges faced by the alliance's eastern flank and difficulties regarding its expansion. Both hailed the centenary of the establishment of diplomatic relations and referred to increasingly strong bilateral ties. Fully 17 agreements are being signed during the Turkish president's visit, including the key strategic partnership agreement between the two countries. Novák also hailed the establishment of cooperation in family affairs, and she welcomed the joint cultural season aimed at reflecting "the richness of the cultures" of the two countries and their commonalities. The presidents will attend the opening concert of the joint Hungarian-Turkish cultural season on Monday in the Müpa.

This year, Erdoğan is visiting Hungary for the second time and the presidents are meeting for the third time, showing how "strategically important friendly relations are", the presidential statement said. Novák met Erdoğan in Ankara during her official visit to Türkiye between March 29 and 31, and the two presidents met again for talks during the Turkish president's visit to Budapest on August 20.

### **SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY, TÜRKIYE EMBARK ON BROADEST EVER ENERGY COOPERATION**

Hungary and Türkiye are embarking on their broadest ever energy cooperation as part of a new agreement after which natural gas imports from Türkiye can start next year, Péter

Szijjártó, the foreign minister, told a press conference held after meeting the Turkish ministers of energy, industry and trade. Szijjártó said the sides signed five agreements. "The last few years have shown that the closer cooperation is between the two countries, the more" Hungary benefits from it, he said. The new deal between Hungarian energy company MVM and Türkiye's BOTAS broadens energy cooperation more than ever before, he added. Türkiye will become a source for Hungary's purchases of natural gas purchases next year, and cooperation will involve storage, infrastructure development, and the use of renewables and hydrogen. Szijjártó said the EU faced "a serious energy crisis", and, in contrast, Hungary's supply was stable as it purchased energy "from reliable partners". Ankara, he added, was key to this, and more than five billion cubic meters of natural gas has already arrived this year through the TurkStream pipeline.

The minister also said cooperation in transport infrastructure development would be strengthened as Hungarian and Turkish rail construction companies V-Híd Építő and Gulermak entered into an alliance. Hungary and Türkiye will be able to take part in major developments and investments bridging Europe and Asia as a result, he said. Cooperation agreements also span Hungary's national archives, the Turkish presidential office, Hungary's Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA) and Turkish

state media service provider TRT, as well as Eötvös Loránd University and the Yunus Emre Institute. He said both countries were "proud of our historical heritage" and "common chapters" from the past. Szijjártó noted that Budapest and Ankara were celebrating the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Also, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan will sign today an agreement on forming a priority strategic partnership.

### **HUNGARY-TÜRKIYE ARMOURED FIGHTING VEHICLES JV ESTABLISHED**

Hungarian and Turkish defence companies are establishing a joint venture to develop the Hungarian assembly and production of Turkish Gidrán armoured fighting vehicles at the Rába Group's production facility in Győr, in western Hungary. Rába Jármű and the Turkish Nurol Makina ve Sanayi's Hungarian subsidiary, Nurol Makina Hungary, announced the deal on Monday on the website of the Budapest Stock Exchange. Hungarian suppliers will have a large role to play and the vehicles are primarily destined for the Hungarian Armed Forces, the statement said. The JV also involves the defence ministry.

### **NAGY MEETS TÜRKIYE INDUSTRY, TECHNOLOGY MINISTER**

Márton Nagy, Hungary's economic development minister, met Mehmet

Fatih Kacir, Türkiye's new industry and technology minister, and Ömer Bolat, the trade minister. The meeting was held on the sidelines of a meeting of the Hungarian-Turkish High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council, convened in Budapest on Monday by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. The sides reviewed current economic developments as well as industrial and commercial cooperation opportunities. Nagy said Hungary was turning itself into a hub of Eastern and Western capital and technology. They agreed on the importance of mutual investment promotion, cooperation in the construction sector and in third countries as well as in the green transition.

In 2022, Türkiye was Hungary's 21st largest trading partner and trade turnover amounted to 3.5 billion US dollars. Hungary's three major export products in that year were vehicles, electrical machinery, devices and instruments and their electrical components. Almost 100 Turkish companies employ nearly 2,000 people, and hundreds of new jobs may be created in the future thanks to Turkish investments, the ministry said in a statement said. Broadening economic and trade ties would focus on energy, logistics, pharmaceuticals, construction, agriculture and the food industry, it added.

### **HUNGARIAN, TURKISH PUBLIC MEDIA CHIEFS SIGN COOPERATION PACT**

Hungarian and Turkish public media chief executives on Monday signed

an agreement on cooperation and an exchange of content in connection with the joint Hungarian-Turkish cultural season, the press and marketing office of Hungary's Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA) said. The document was signed at the foreign ministry in Budapest by Dániel Papp, MTVA's chief executive, and Mehmet Zahid Sobacı, head of Turkish state media service provider TRT. MTVA and TRT agreed on closely cooperating on content in the interest of the "worthy celebration" of the year-long joint Hungarian-Turkish cultural season in honour of the centenary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries. The sides agreed to continuously update each other on the programmes and festivities organised in connection with the cultural season and to share with each other the programming they produce about it. Under the agreement, next year the public media companies will each hold a day focusing on the other country, sharing the related programming. The signatories were in agreement that the exchange of content enhanced cultural dialogue and strengthened ties between their peoples. They underlined their intent to place special emphasis on historical, cultural and art assets when putting together their programmes.

### **VARGA: BUDGET WORKING GROUP HOLDS INAUGURAL MEETING**

The Hungarian budget working group, tasked with protecting the fiscal

balance, held its inaugural meeting on Monday, Finance Minister Mihály Varga, the group's head, said. The body weighed 54 proposals, approving most before the cabinet considered them, and "vetoing or delivering a negative opinion" on six, Varga said in a video message posted on Facebook. "The goal is clear: the strict defence of the budget balance and the further reduction of deficit and public debt levels," he added. He said Hungary aimed to reduce state debt relative to GDP to below 60% by 2026, adding that high GDP growth, further tax cuts, a reduction of the debt burden and improving economic outlooks would provide the foundation to achieve that target. The budget working group, established early in December, is composed of the head of the Prime Minister's Office, the head of the Prime Minister's Cabinet Office and the prime minister's political director, as well as the finance minister.

### **DEPUTY PM CONGRATULATES VMSZ ON ELECTION SUCCESS**

Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén on behalf of the Hungarian government congratulated the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) on its success at the Serbian elections in a post late on Sunday. According to preliminary results, by winning at least five mandates, VMSZ has retained its own group in Serbia's parliament.

VMSZ) had achieved a "great and shining" victory in Serbia's recent

general election, Árpád János Potápi, the prime ministerial state secretary for Hungarian communities abroad, said, adding that VMSZ had become “the most successful ethnic Hungarian party in the Carpathian Basin. VMSZ has proved in the past 32 years that “the Hungarian community must have a single ethnic party” in a given country, Potápi told an event. He highlighted the efforts of VMSZ activists in the election campaign, “reaching out to almost each and every Hungarian” in Vojvodina, adding that the ethnic party had retained its earlier position in Serbia’s parliament. Bálint Pásztor, the acting leader of VMSZ, said his party had garnered 62,000 votes, which translates into six seats in parliament.

### **DEFMIN: ‘PEACE IN BALKANS IS OUR PEACE’**

There is no peace in the Western Balkans, nor in Hungary, without peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the defence minister said, addressing a farewell ceremony for Hungarians to serve on the EU’s EUFOR ALTHEA mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky noted that the mission’s command will be taken over by Major General László Sticz from January 2024 and the staff of the Hungarian contingent serving there would be tripled to 400 troops. A 250-strong Hungarian unit deployed on the field will provide areal search, rescue and evacuation tasks, patrols, medical assistance and logistical support, the minister said. In

addition, a 150-strong unit composed of a manoeuvre squadron, a military police group, a technical group and a chemical defence group with water purification capabilities will stand by in Hungary to support the mission, he said.

The minister said the Hungarian contingent would be deployed “in a difficult time probably never seen before”. He noted a deteriorating security situation in the region with a pressure posed by migration in the south, terrorist organisations becoming more active and “the traces and wounds of the Balkan wars”. Szalay-Bobrovniczky called the ALTHEA mission “a great honour and at the same time a huge opportunity to test and prove Hungary’s army development [programme]”. Sticz said peace and stability in the Western Balkans was in Hungary’s vested interest, which was why Hungary had been serving on missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina for almost 30 years.

### **SOCIALISTS PROPOSE ‘HONEST’ BILLING FOR GAS**

The opposition Socialist Party has submitted a bill aimed at making state owned gas and electricity provider MVM introduce a new practice of “fair and honest” invoicing to prevent the company from “using customers’ money without paying interest”. Socialist group leader Bertalan Tóth said on Facebook that MVM routinely charged customers “unrealistically high” amounts for gas, a “trick to

use their money for months”. He added that at a time of “record-high” inflation that practice hurt households. Tóth quoted Energy Minister Csaba Lantos as indicating earlier that the government would not change the billing system until 2025, and slammed the government for the distant date whereas “it took but a few days to grant ministers and state secretaries a pay hike worth millions of forints”.

### **LMP: WITH SHRINKING POPULATION, GOVT SHOULD DO MORE TO ENTICE YOUNG PEOPLE HOME**

Hungary will not see a “demographic turnaround” unless young people working abroad are offered attractive opportunities at home, the deputy group leader of opposition LMP told an online press briefing. Máté Kanász-Nagy called the government’s family policy a “failure”, and insisted that the emigration of young people was one of the country’s gravest challenges. In the past decade some 400,000-500,000 young people left Hungary for other countries in western Europe in the hope of leading a better life, he said. Rather than building a knowledge-based society, the government has worked to create “an entire economy to serve multinationals ... turning Hungary into an assembly plant”. The jobs offered in that system involve work of little value-added and meagre wages, which “is not attractive to young people”, Kanász-



Nagy said. Citing survey results, he said “every other Hungarian aged 16-24 is mulling a future in another country”. Concerning the government’s new offices set up to help young people returning from abroad, Kanász-Nagy said the system was a “PR trick”, insisting that the offices could not provide any more help than basic advice in Hungarian cities rather in other countries.

### **KSH: 6,780 BIRTHS, 10,351 DEATHS IN NOV**

The number of births fell by 6.9% in November compared with the same month in the previous year, while deaths dropped by 5.6%, according to preliminary data published by the Central Statistical Office (KSH). Meanwhile, the number of marriages decreased by 2.2% during the same period. Fully 6,780 children were born in November, while there were 10,351 deaths. Altogether, 3,107 couples got married. The natural population loss was 3,571 people compared with 3,678

in October 2022. Fully 78,579 children were born between January 2023 and November 2023, 3.1% fewer than in the same period of last year. Altogether 114,950 people died between January 2023 and November 2023, 7.2% fewer than in the same period of last year. In the same period, 47,480 couples tied the knot, 22% fewer than in the same period of last year. There were 8.9 live births and 13.1 deaths per thousand inhabitants, the former 0.02 of a percentage point lower than in the January-October 2022 period, while the death rate was 0.09 of a percentage point lower.

### **WATCHDOG SHUTS DOWN FALCON PYRAMID SCHEME**

The National Bank of Hungary has blocked the websites of Falcon Kereskedőház and Falcon Benefit and frozen accounts used in a suspected pyramid scheme, the central bank and financial market regulator said. Falcon sold “purchase vouchers” and “programme

contracts” promising unrealistically high guaranteed yields to clients, collecting amounts “in the billions” from at least 4,400 investors, the NBH established in a probe. The NBH fined the companies and one private individual a combined HUF 1.5bn for providing unlicensed financial services. It also filed a criminal report on suspicion of fraud, falsifying public documents and organising a pyramid scheme. Some 2.3 billion forints in assets have been frozen on Falcon accounts.

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

Fully 5,227 Ukrainian citizens entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Sunday, while 4,329 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 65 people, ORFK said on Monday.