

In this week's *Türkiye in Focus*:

- President Erdoğan showed Ankara's sensible, measured stance following the European Commission President's remarks.
- The promotion of Diyarbakır's Amedspor to the Süper Lig is regarded not merely as a sporting success but as a positive symbolic moment within the "Terror-Free Türkiye" process.
- The latest innovations of Türkiye's defence industry are on display at the SAHA 2026 exhibition. Researcher Çağdaş Yüksel offered his insights on the developments.

Ankara calls for a broader vision in Türkiye-EU cooperation



(Dursun Aydemir - Anadolu Agency)

Recent remarks by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, categorising Türkiye alongside Russia and China as a threat to Europe, have sparked debate in Brussels

and Ankara. President Erdoğan addressed these comments after a cabinet meeting. He opted for a long-term, strategic approach rather than a direct polemic. He emphasised that Türkiye should be seen as an essential EU partner, not only in crises. He highlighted the depth of the relationship and noted the EU's lack of reciprocal vision, despite Türkiye's constructive steps.

Government officials and analysts increasingly note Türkiye's growing global importance, especially its rising influence in defence. They say Türkiye's role in European security and politics is more vital than ever. Despite occasional diplomatic friction, Ankara's steady push for full EU membership shows a constructive approach. By focusing on integration and cooperation, Türkiye positions itself as a pillar of regional stability, highlighting the need for a broader strategic horizon for both parties.

Amedspor and the Politics of National Unity

The promotion of Amedspor to the Süper Lig is much more than a standard football success story; it marks a significant moment in Türkiye's social journey. For years, the club from Diyarbakır was at the heart of complex debates, with its very name—an ancient Kurdish title for the city—provoking controversy. However, those days of tension are behind us. Today, Amedspor's rise to the top tier represents a new chapter in which sport serves as a common ground for all citizens, moving beyond old disagreements towards a shared sporting future.

This achievement comes at a time when the "Terror-Free Türkiye" process has created a much more positive and inclusive atmosphere across the country. The shift from polarisation to unity is best seen in the warm reactions from the highest levels of the state. The congratulations from President Erdoğan and MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli show that Amedspor is now embraced as a valued part of Türkiye's national fabric. This support signals a move towards a future in which every region feels represented and celebrated in the country's premier football league.



(Ali Makram Ghareeb - Anadolu Agency)

Ultimately, Amedspor's success is a powerful symbol of national cohesion and hope. The excitement felt across the eastern provinces is now a source of joy for the entire nation, proving that different identities can strengthen a single, unified spirit. By focusing on the pitch's positive energy, Türkiye is demonstrating that the future is about togetherness and equal representation. This isn't just about a team winning a trophy; it is about the sports bringing people closer together in a stronger, more united Türkiye.

SAHA 2026: Türkiye's Strategic Threshold in Defence



(Cem Tekkeşinoğlu - Anadolu Agency)

Researcher Çağdaş Yüksel evaluated SAHA 2026 and the Turkish defence industry.

SAHA 2026 International Defence, Aerospace and Space Industry Fair has opened its doors at the Istanbul Expo Centre, reflecting Türkiye's expanding technological vision in defence, aviation and space industries. Bringing together nearly 1,700 companies from more than 120 countries across an area exceeding 400,000 square meters, the event has become more than a defence exhibition. With over 200,000 visitors, 30,000 industry professionals, and dozens of official delegations attending, SAHA 2026 serves as a strategic platform that highlights Türkiye's growing role in the global defence ecosystem.

The exhibition reflects not only Türkiye's production capacity but also its increasing export ambitions. Following 6.2 billion dollars in export agreements achieved in 2024, this year's target of at least 8 billion dollars demonstrates the continued expansion of Türkiye's defence industry into international markets.

One of the defining aspects of SAHA 2026 is that the systems on display combine technological sophistication with operational relevance. Baykar's MIZRAK smart loitering munition, which exceeds a range of 1,000 kilometres and incorporates AI-supported autonomous capabilities, points directly to the evolving nature of modern warfare. Similarly, the K2 loitering munition and Sivrisinek systems reflect how low-cost but high-impact technologies are reshaping asymmetric conflict environments where speed, flexibility and cost-efficiency have become decisive factors.

ASELSAN's integrated air, land and naval solutions further demonstrate that warfare is no longer defined by individual platforms alone but by how systems operate together within a network-centric structure. Electronic warfare, radar and sensor technologies increasingly provide information superiority alongside traditional battlefield capabilities. In parallel, the ALKA-KAPLAN directed energy platform,

developed by ROKETSAN and FNSS, underscores the growing importance of laser-based systems against emerging aerial threats.

Perhaps the clearest indicator of Türkiye's defence transformation is its progress in missile technologies. The TAYFUN BLOCK 4 hypersonic ballistic missile system, showcased at SAHA 2026, reflects Türkiye's growing deterrence capability. Capable of reaching speeds exceeding Mach 5, the system represents not only a technological achievement but also a strategic message regarding long-range precision strike capacity. Supporting systems such as SİPER, GÖKDOĞAN and BOZDOĞAN further strengthen Türkiye's layered air defence architecture.

The importance of these systems becomes even more apparent in light of recent conflicts. The Russia-Ukraine war has demonstrated how modern warfare increasingly combines conventional operations with unmanned systems, electronic warfare and precision-guided munitions. Low-cost drones have proven capable of imposing disproportionate costs on expensive military platforms, while rapid data integration and real-time decision-making have become central to battlefield effectiveness. Many of the technologies showcased at SAHA 2026 directly address these changing operational realities.

Türkiye's defence industry has also gained credibility because many of its systems have been tested under real combat conditions in Iraq, Syria, Karabakh and Ukraine. Platforms such as Bayraktar TB2, ANKA and AKINCI have demonstrated how intelligence gathering, targeting and strike capabilities can be integrated into a single operational cycle, significantly reducing response times on the battlefield. This operational experience has positioned Türkiye not only as a supplier of defence products but also as a provider of effective military operational models.

At the same time, increasing regional tensions continue to reinforce the strategic importance of a strong domestic defence industry. Israel's aggressive and expansionist military posture in the region has further exposed the fragility of regional stability and highlighted the importance of deterrence in an increasingly volatile security environment.

In this context, SAHA 2026 reflects more than technological progress. It represents Türkiye's broader pursuit of strategic autonomy, technological sovereignty and operational effectiveness. Positioned at the intersection of innovation, battlefield experience and international cooperation, the exhibition demonstrates Türkiye's ambition to emerge not merely as a participant but as a shaping actor in the evolving global defence landscape.

Highlights

- The export figures for April have been announced. Exports increased by 22.3% year over year, reaching \$ 25.4 billion. This has gone down in history as the second-highest monthly export figure in the Republic's history.
- Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz travelled to Armenia to attend the 8th Summit of the European Political Community. It is noted that this visit by a high-level state official to Armenia after a long hiatus is significant for the normalisation of bilateral relations.
- The World Decolonisation Forum will gather prominent academics, journalists, and experts in Istanbul on May 11-12 to scrutinise the legacy of colonialism and its ongoing impact on today's global crises.

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