

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Péter Komka

Speleologist József Regős in the Lilla Cave in the Bükk mountains in northern Hungary

UPCOMING EVENTS

Laotian prime minister, foreign minister visits Hungary

Szijjártó meets Dutch counterpart

Stats office releases foreign trade figures for January

Plenary session of parliament

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: NATO'S REPUTATION INCREASING

NATO is being increasingly appreciated in light of Europe's "fragile security", Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told a celebration marking the anniversaries of the Visegrad Four countries' joining that organisation, in Wesola, near Warsaw.

Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic joined NATO 20 years ago, on March 12, 1999, while Slovakia followed suit five years later.

Concerning Hungary's participation in NATO missions, Orbán said that aid should be provided where it is needed; "unless we deliver that aid in time, the problems will come to our place".

In his address, Orbán thanked the other Visegrad countries for helping to protect Hungary's southern borders from illegal migrants.

Orbán noted that NATO had been created to promote peace, security, stability and prosperity all over the world and said that those goals are still valid. He added that currently 692 Hungarian troops are serving in NATO missions across the world, a number soon to be increased by 130.

At another event, Orbán decorated Kornel Morawiecki, member of the Polish parliament's upper house, and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki's father, with the Order of Merit of Hungary, Middle Cross. Morawiecki was decorated for his solidarity to Hungary and his work to strengthen the two countries' ties.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ: BRUSSELS'S 'GREATEST LIE' REVEALED

A recent document by the legal service of the European Commission has "revealed the greatest lie by Brussels", Foreign Minister Péter Sziijártó said on Sunday, and insisted that the document, recently obtained by public television M1, suggests "secret efforts to make mandatory the UN Migration Compact" in all EU member states.

Speaking at a press conference, Sziijártó said that during the debate on the package "all pro-migration politicians" had insisted that the compact would not be made mandatory.

The Hungarian government "calls on the European Commission to stop making secret plans to make the UN compact mandatory and publish all relevant documents completed so far", Sziijártó said.

He added that the government would call on the EC to report on "any such secret plans" at a foreign affairs council session on March 18.

HUNGARIAN PM OFFICE BACKS DEMONSTRATION FOR SZEKLER AUTONOMY

The Hungarian Prime Minister's Office has voiced support for a demonstration held on Sunday in Targu Mures (Marosvásárhely), Romania, for the autonomy of the Szeklers, a Hungarian minority in central and western Romania.

In a statement to MTI, Árpád János Potápi, the state secretary for Hungarians abroad, said that autonomy is the best way to ensure the continued existence of ethnic minorities. The Szekler minority "wants autonomy allowing them to use their mother tongue and national symbols in a way that does not harm majority nationals, nothing more than the rights granted to minorities in many European countries," he said.

The autonomy of Szekler Land is a cause for all Hungarians, Potápi said.

The demonstration was held on the Day of Szekler Freedom, the anniversary of the execution of Szekler patriots in 1854.

MTA HEAD, MINISTER SIGN LETTER OF INTENT ON FUTURE OF ACADEMY RESEARCH NETWORK

The network of research institutes of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) will be separated from the MTA but its structure will otherwise remain unchanged, said a letter of intent signed by MTA head László Lovász and László Palkovics, the minister of innovation and technology, at their talks on Friday. The research institutes will operate independently from the MTA as of January 1, 2020, MTA said in a statement. In the future, structural changes will be decided by a new governing body to which the government and the MTA will both delegate members in a way that ensures a majority representation of the

scientific community, the letter of intent said. The assets used by the institutes will remain MTA's property, it said.

"The minister of innovation and technology provides funding for the operation of MTA's research institutes between January 1, 2019, and May 31, 2019," the document said. "Funding will continue at a 2019 level after an agreement has been concluded and until the new administrative system starts operation", it said. The government aims to raise research funding in the future, the letter of intent said. Palkovics announced in December 2018 that his ministry had been tasked with redefining allocations for research and redesigning the entire system of the Academy. "Top researchers, rather than institutions, should be supported financially," he said. "Changes under way have nothing to do either with the Academy or its network's independence since all of the latter body's rights are enshrined in the constitution", he said.

KMKF CALLS ON PARLT TO DECLARE 2020 'YEAR OF NATIONAL COHESION'

The Forum of Hungarian Lawmakers in the Carpathian Basin (KMKF) called on the Hungarian parliament and government to declare 2020 a year of national cohesion in its closing statement. In line with House Speaker László Kövér's proposal, the statement called on parliament to make all decisions in its power so

that “the nation may remember the tragedy of [the post-WWI] Trianon [peace treaty] in a worthy manner and ... draw strength to preserve its identity.” The document welcomed that the Hungarian government has declared 2019 the year of Hungarian children born abroad.

It also said that a strong representation of the Carpathian Basin in the European Parliament can keep the issues important for the community on the agenda. The KMKF expressed unanimous support for the Minority SafePack, an initiative to protect indigenous minorities within the EU. The KMKF finds the curbing of acquired rights of ethnic minorities “unacceptable”, and expresses solidarity with Transcarpathia’s Hungarian community sticking to its long-standing system of mother-tongue education. The widest possible range of self-governance is the best way to ensure the long-term existence and prosperity of ethnic minorities, it said. The forum welcomed the forthcoming visit of Pope Francis to Şumuleu Ciuc (Csíksomlyó), a traditional pilgrimage site for Hungarians in Romania, as a historic event for Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin, KMKF said in its closing statement.

OPPOSITION LAWMAKERS CALL FOR COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMMES FOR WOMEN

Female opposition lawmakers called for wage equality, the introduction of

free gynaecological screenings and educational programmes targeting disadvantaged girls and women in Budapest on Friday, marking International Women’s Day.

Ágnes Vadai of the leftist Democratic Coalition told a joint press conference that women today are disadvantaged in many fields of life “simply because they were born women”. She called for a “national programme for women” to list and monitor women’s problems and to integrate solutions into legislation. Socialist lawmaker Ágnes Kunhalmi called for an education programme targeting the “several hundreds of thousand” women who she said are “almost totally marginalised” for lack of adequate schooling. Deputy party group leader Ildikó Borbély Bangó said that one-parent families, overwhelmingly managed by women, should be granted specific state subsidies. Párbeszéd group leader Tímea Szabó noted that 9,000 Hungarian women a year are found to suffer from breast cancer and “an astoundingly high number”, 2,000 every year, die of the disease. She called for accessible and free screening programmes to fight the trend. Conservative Jobbik’s Andrea Varga-Damm said that a “true equality” of women is necessary, and Anita Potocska Kőrösi, another MP of the party, called for government support for scientific research on the subject.

Independent lawmaker Anett Bósz, of the Liberal Party, said that the Hungarian economy will lose

revenue if it “fails to restore gender equality”. She said that the Liberals are initiating a comprehensive scheme to help women balance family life and career. This is not a women’s issue but the country’s social and economic interest, she said. Independent lawmaker Bernadett Szél noted that currently, one woman dies every week in Hungary as a consequence of domestic violence, and called for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

POLITICIANS FOR SUPPORTING WOMEN ON INTL WOMEN’S DAY

Government officials emphasised the importance of further central support for women while opposition politicians called for ensuring them equal opportunities in society, public life, politics and employment on Friday, on International Women’s Day. Improving the situation of women in Hungary is a government objective which is inseparable from its policy of supporting families raising children, the state secretary for family and youth affairs told a conference hosted by the club of young families in Budapest. Katalin Novák noted government measures that include a three-year maternity leave, retirement option for women after 40 years of work and expanding creches capacity. She also announced the launching of the Women for the Hungarian Nation Movement to promote the cause of family as

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a major force in holding the nation together. Government spokesman István Hollik told the conference that the government's responsibility is to support women and ensure them the free choice to decide whether to work or raise children or both.

Zsolt Molnár, leader of the opposition Socialists' Budapest chapter, said the party supports setting a higher quota for women in politics. To this effect, the Socialists will field an increased number of women candidates on their lists in the municipal elections this autumn, he told a press conference. If elected to govern Budapest, the Socialists will enact measures to help support victims of domestic violence, he said. On this score, Kata Tüttő, an MEP candidate of the party, called for increasing care home capacity for the victims and launching social dialogue about the issue.

A lawmaker of opposition LMP said the party will demand equal opportunities in the workplace and equal wages for women. Gábor Vágó, LMP's top candidate for the EP elections, urged building more creches and higher wages for nurses there. Márta Demeter, LMP's co-leader,

said that her party, once in power, would use EU funds for increasing the wages of women and called for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

GÜNTNER TATA TO SPEND HUF 8 BN ON EXPANSION IN W HUNGARY

German-owned Güntner Tata Hűtőtechnika, which makes refrigeration technology, will invest 8 billion forints (EUR 25.3m) at its base in the western Hungarian town of Tata, creating 150 jobs. The investment is supported with a 1.5 billion forint government grant, Levente Magyar, a state secretary of the ministry of foreign affairs and trade, said. Managing director Tamás Schwarzenberger said the investment will add a 9,000 square metre production hall and a logistic centre comprising a 6,500 square metre warehouse to the base. Güntner Tata Hűtőtechnika exported 95% of its output last year. The base in Tata is the group's biggest production plant, which also performs development tasks.

The company had revenue of 151 billion forints in 2017, public records show. Güntner Tata signed a strategic cooperation agreement with the government on the occasion of the announcement of the investment.

BUDAPEST MUSEUM SHOWS HUNGARIANS IN CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH

Hungarian 1848/49 emigre officers in California's Gold Rush and their career in gold is the focus of an exhibition that opened in the Hungarian National Museum. The first nuggets of gold were found in California in January, 1848, triggering an inflow of hundreds of thousands within a few years to the wild west, the director of the museum said. Among them were a group of highly qualified, well-educated, foreign language speaking military officers who emigrated to the United States after the crushing of Hungary's 1848/49 War of Independence, Benedek Varga told a press conference. They however made their fortune and career not as "average gold diggers", but thanks to their skills and newly acquired knowledge as engineers, metallurgists, smelters and assayers, he said.