

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Prime Minister Viktor Orbán addresses March 15 state celebration

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU foreign ministers meet in Brussels

Plenary session of parl

EP election campaign events

Budapest mayor, Olympic champion Hosszú give joint press conference

TOP STORY

ORBÁN CALLS FOR PROTECTING CHRISTIAN CULTURE

Europe's peoples should "see and understand that Europe will have no free life without its Christian culture", the prime minister said at a state celebration on the anniversary of Hungary's 1848 revolution in front of Budapest's National Museum on Friday.

"Unless we protect our Christian culture we will lose Europe and Europe will no longer belong to Europeans," Viktor Orbán said, adding that "all of us would lose our freedom in a liberal empire". "Nobody can be free if they are subjects of an empire rather than children of a free nation. Europeans can only be happy if they can decide on their own fate and on the future of their nation."

Orbán welcomed Polish participants in the celebrations, saying that "without Poland Hungary would not be free and Europe could not have been re-united". "When they attack Poland from Brussels, they attack the whole of central Europe, including us, Hungarians. Our message to the empire-builders seeking to extend their shadow over central Europe is that they will always need to consider Hungarian-Polish ties," he said.

Concerning Europe, the prime minister called for "strong nation states and new, strong leaders" who will "take aid over there rather than bring problems over here". "We want a new beginning to stop Europe's decline and put an end to the nightmare of a united states of Europe," he said.

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MORAWIECKI: 'POLAND, HUNGARY FIGHTING AGAIN FOR COMMON FUTURE'

Poland and Hungary are once again fighting together for a common future and "supporting justice, solidarity and equal rights as they did in 1848-49," Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Morawiecki said during a state celebration of the anniversary of Hungary's 1848 revolution in Budapest. Morawiecki noted that the two nations had been friends for over a thousand years and fought together for freedom on several occasions. "Now we are fighting for a better Hungary, a better Poland, a better Europe. For all who believe in a Europe of nations which will serve the common man rather than the elites," he said.

ÁDER PRESENTS HIGH STATE AWARDS

President János Áder presented Hungary's state orders as well as the prestigious Kossuth and Széchenyi prizes and the Orders of Merit to recognise public personalities, artists and scientists on the occasion of the anniversary of the 1848 revolution in Parliament. "Your achievements and successful careers offer guidance to all of us, this modern national community, which has not lost its ability to appreciate its assets; not even during the historical storms it faced since 1848-49," he said.

This year's Kossuth Grand Prize was awarded to actress Mari Törőcsik. Further 16 artists received the Kossuth Prize while Széchenyi prizes were awarded to 16 scholars, researchers and engineers.

The president awarded the Order of Hungary, Grand Cross, to Imre Kónya, founder of the Independent Lawyers Forum that paved the way for Hungary's peaceful transition to democracy in 1989-1990.

KÖVÉR: HUNGARY, POLAND JOINTLY MEETING CHALLENGES

Hungary and Poland are meeting challenges of the 21st century together, House Speaker László Kövér said in an interview to Polish public radio.

Kövéer insisted that the governments of the two countries have realised that those challenges could only be met by joint action, with special regard to migration. The migration crisis, he said, is not "an isolated accident" but "an obvious consequence of the European Union's distorted functioning".

According to Kövéer, the EU "seeks to interfere with domestic affairs of (its) sovereign members" trying "more and more aggressively" to make them accept "a vision for Europe invented in Brussels and in the capitals of some old member states".

Answering a question about the upcoming EP elections, Kövéer said he trusted that the vote would bring about a change, but added that a

transformation was also possible in which "traditional party groups may disappear and give way to a new structure". The European "front line" is no longer between the traditional Right and Left, Kövéer said but between forces promoting "cooperation between sovereign nation states" and "globalists who want to do away with sovereignty", Kövéer said. He also added that "old" members of the EU, "doomed to a demographic death" are trying to "lure away skilled young labour from central Europe".

NATIONAL HOLIDAY MARKED IN ETHNIC HUNGARIAN COMMUNITIES

Several officials of the Hungarian government and leaders of ethnic Hungarian communities beyond the borders marked the March 15 national holiday.

Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén said in Arad, Romania, that the message of the 1848 revolution was that Hungarians must survive in their homeland.

He said that while both the 1848 and 1956 revolutions failed, they brought Hungary recognition and changed the country's future.

Speaking at a commemoration event in Odorheiu Secuiesc (Székelyudvarhely), in central Romania, defence ministry state secretary and Fidesz deputy leader Szilárd Németh said May's EP elections would be "the most important battle of the spring

crusade". Hungarians, he said, would have to decide at the election whether they want to live in a country of Hungarians or a country of immigrants.

Addressing an event in western Ukraine's Mukacheve (Munkács), Fidesz MEP Andrea Bocskor said 1848 showed that no amount of oppression could keep Hungarians down. "The freedom for which our ancestors fought is the same freedom we must preserve and protect today," she told the commemoration event organised by the Transcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association (KMKSZ).

OPPOSITION PARTIES HOLD JOINT DEMONSTRATION

Hungary's parliamentary opposition parties emphasised the importance of cooperation at a joint demonstration held on the occasion of the March 15 national holiday on Budapest's Szabadsajtó (Freedom of the Press) Road.

Klára Dobrev, who heads the European parliamentary election list of the leftist opposition Democratic Coalition (DK), called for establishing a "normal, livable" Hungary, which she said required "clearing out the Orbán regime". She said everyone who is a patriot today must revolt against the Fidesz government. Those who still strike a deal with Orbán's regime for the sake of their livelihood "destroy their own future", she added.

Independent MP Ákos Hadházy said that instead of talking too much

and plotting against each other, the opposition parties needed to work and organise themselves, and instead of resignation they needed resolve and determination.

Péter Márki-Zay, mayor of Hódmezővásárhely and head of the Everyone's Hungary Movement, said the governing politicians had "good reason" to be scared because something had changed. He called on the parties to support the most suitable, preferably independent candidates, who can also attract votes from Fidesz voters in the autumn municipal election, instead of "party soldiers".

Jobbik spokesman Péter Jakab said Orbán did not understand the message of March 15, saying that it was "not the holiday of the tyrant but of the people". He said Orbán was only out to eliminate Brussels, while "he has replaced freedom with servility, equality with inequality and fraternity with hate".

LMP board member Szabolcs Turcsán said the opposition must turn its diversity into an advantage, because it can only succeed if it learns to engage in politics in a way that helps everyone.

Anett Bósz of the Liberal Party said today's protestors had the same goals that 19th-century poet Sándor Petőfi had stood up for in 1848: press freedom, equality in front of the law and a responsible government.

Independent Student Parliament representative Dániel Kálló, who is fifth on the Socialist Party's EP election list,

said that as long as young people were not free to decide on their own futures, it would be stolen from them.

Anna Donáth, deputy leader of the opposition Momentum Movement, said that in order for a united opposition to be successful, the various parties had to identify values that could convince everyone that the parties want a better and fairer country.

Párbeszéd MEP Benedek Jávor said that in May's EP elections, every voter would get the chance to send a message to the government that they favour Europe over "Eastern oppression" and freedom over tyranny.

GYURCSÁNY: 'TIME TO FIGHT IS NOW'

"The time to fight is now," Ferenc Gyurcsány, leader of the leftist opposition Democratic Coalition (DK), said at his party's commemoration of the 1848-49 revolution and freedom fight, adding that it was not enough for Hungarians to "complain and moan". "The extra-parliamentary opposition can only oust the dictators together," Gyurcsány said. He said Hungary's parliamentary opposition "are not capable of solving this problem on their own", arguing that Hungary was not a parliamentary democracy. "Protesting on the streets and striking may be exhausting, but the homeland is worth this much," he said. Gyurcsány called on Hungarians to "revolt wherever they can".

He said the only condition for cooperation among the opposition

parties was that none of them must question human dignity, democracy or the principle of the rule of law. "But the devil can't be replaced by Lucifer," Gyurcsány said, adding that the opposition's goal was not merely to oust Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, but to make Hungary a country in which everyone looks out for one another.

He said Hungary's situation today was "also infecting Europe". Gyurcsány said he expects every European country to take good care of their shared continent and understand that if Hungary hits trouble, eventually they would, too.

SOCIALISTS CALL FOR FIGHT FOR PRESS FREEDOM

Hungary "needs to fight for the freedom of the press just like in 1848", the head of the opposition Socialists said at ceremony, and insisted that "the ruling parties will now do everything to prevent the press from being free".

Bertalan Tóth spoke at the hand-over ceremony of the Free Press Awards, and said that the government "tramples on the rule of law" and neglects European norms, while "the prime minister puts his own privileges before the interests of the whole nation". "Hungary has no media freedom, because those in power now control the whole media", he added. "We are now where we were 171 years ago: we need to regain a free press," he insisted.

LMP WARNS OF 'NEW THREATS' TO FREEDOM, INDEPENDENCE

Leaders of the opposition LMP party marked the anniversary of Hungary's 1848 revolution, and warned of "new challenges threatening our freedom and independence".

At a commemoration held in the Castle District, LMP co-leader László Lóránt Keresztes said that "foreign, mainly Russian influence is increasing, facilitated by the treacherous policies of the (Hungarian) government, which pretends to be patriotic", and called for setting up a "national" government, which "in fact promotes the interests of the people".

Márta Demeter, LMP's other co-leader, insisted that "the freedom of the media and equality before the law are being violated, the national bank is no longer independent, and parliament fails to promote national interests". She insisted that "the traitors looting from the nation must be removed from power".

ROGÁN: FIDESZ TO STAY IN EPP UNTIL 'IT TURNS PRO-MIGRATION OVERALL'

Hungary's ruling Fidesz party considers it worth remaining a member of the European People's Party (EPP) as long as it stays clear from identifying fully with a pro-migration policy, the prime minister's cabinet chief told public Kossuth radio's morning programme.

"Fidesz must fight for Europe's renewal as a member of EPP, as long as there is a chance within that party group to elect new leaders who will be able to halt migration and protect Europe's borders and Christian culture," Antal Rogán said in an interview. The upcoming European parliamentary elections will give a chance to achieve this goal after a series of failures suffered by the bloc under the leadership of European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker over the past five years, Rogán said.

He stressed the need to have an open debate over the question whether or not Europe "wants migrants". Rogán said there were many EPP members counting on the votes of the European pro-migration left to have group leader Manfred Weber, EPP's Spitzenkandidat in the EP elections, elected as European Commission president. But statements by these politicians often fail to reflect the original position of the party, he said. A major part of the EPP opposes the pro-migrant views of some of its other members and the European left as a whole including the Greens and the Liberals, Rogán added.

In the weeks to come the Hungarian government will focus on its family support measures which, however, does not imply a change in the prime minister's policy concerning migration, he said.

Viktor Orbán will maintain its proposals for returning border protection from the scope of the European Commission to the individual

EU nation states, assigning decisions on migration and border protection to a new council composed of EU Schengen country interior ministers and having Brussels to reimburse half of the border protection costs covered by EU member states, Rogán said.

“Until these proposals are wiped off altogether, Fidesz will stay within the EPP,” Rogán said.

Rogán called it “surprising” that the issue of the Central European University (CEU) is considered more important by Brussels than by the US government, which could conclude over the past weeks that the university’s operation in Budapest was ensured. The Hungarian government is, however, ready to study proposals that do not require amending Hungarian laws and might be joined by other governments, too, the PM’s cabinet chief said.

SOCIALISTS CALL ON FIDESZ TO REMOVE TRÓCSÁNYI FROM EP LIST

The opposition Socialists have called on ruling Fidesz to remove Justice Minister László Trócsányi from its list of candidates for the European parliamentary elections. Trócsányi, who tops the list, has let Russian arms dealers escape by extraditing them to Russia rather than the United States, board member Dávid Bihal told a press conference on Sunday. The European People’s Party including its group leader and Spitzenkandidat Manfred Weber and Hungarian Prime Minister

Viktor Orbán will lose its credibility, if it fails to demand Trócsányi’s removal from the list, he said. Bihal accused Orbán of “preparing for the EP elections with [Russian President Vladimir] Putin’s list”.

The Socialist politician said that agents of the “Russian services” are operating freely in Hungary, entering and leaving the country without any control by the authorities. Referring to the relocation of the International Investment Bank to Hungary, Bihal said that “an intelligence agency disguised as a Russian bank has been invited here”. As a consequence, he said, Hungary has become the biggest security risk within the European Union.

VENICE COMMISSION: LAW ON ADMINISTRATIVE COURTS ‘LACKING CHECKS AND BALANCES’

Under Hungary’s new law on administrative courts “very extensive powers are concentrated in the hands of a few stakeholders” while the legislation lacks “effective checks and balances to counteract those powers”, the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission said in an opinion.

Members of the European Union have the sovereign right to set up such independent court systems within their judiciary, the commission said, and added that “guaranteeing the transfer of all current administrative judges wishing to be incorporated in the new administrative courts and

opening up access to the function of administrative judge to individuals with substantial experience in public administration are commendable”.

In its opinion, however, the body said that the head of the supreme administrative court (SAC) “has a wide range of powers not only in relation to the other SAC judges, but also in relation to judges of other administrative courts and administrative court staff”.

“Individually, most of these powers should not adversely affect the independence of justice and the assignment of powers, but when taken together, in combination with the election of the SAC president by the National Assembly and the broad powers of the justice minister, with whom the president acts in concert on many matters, these powers raise questions”, the opinion said.

The opinion was requested by László Trócsányi, Hungary’s justice minister, who also attended the Friday session of the commission.

ÁDER SENDS CONDOLENCES OVER TERRORIST ATTACKS IN NEW ZEALAND

President Janos Áder has expressed his condolences to Governor-General Patsy Reddy of New Zealand over the terrorist attacks committed in Christchurch on Friday. In the message, Áder said he was deeply shocked to learn about the attacks that claimed many lives. On behalf of

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the Hungarian people, the president expressed condolences to the families and friends of the victims and wished quick recovery to those injured.

At least 49 people were shot dead and 20 seriously wounded at two mosques of the city during the afternoon prayers. Four suspected perpetrators have been taken into custody.

Hungary's counter-terrorism force TEK said it works together with partner organisations in investigations concerning the mosque shootings. Bulgarian authorities said earlier that they had launched an investigation against a suspect, Brenton Tarrant, an Australian citizen, who had visited Hungary and Romania before.

AUSTRIAN MEP: 'DEFENDING SOCIETY TOP PRIORITY'

The most important task today is to defend our own society and this is also a political task, an MEP of the Austrian Freedom Party told public media in Vienna in connection with the challenges posed by migration.

Harald Vilimsky said he agrees with the migration policy of the Hungarian prime minister and is perplexed over the "fierce attacks" Brussels launched against Viktor Orbán and his government. "It was him [Orbán], who in 2015 defended the borders and who continues to fight against turning Europe into a multicultural continent,"

the European lawmaker said. Vilimsky said Orbán has every reason to say that migration to Europe will not stop. "I would be pleased to work more closely with him to avert this threat," he said. Vilimsky said he supported the position that Hungary should have the right to decide whom it allows to enter its territory.

Asked about the initiative to expel Fidesz from the European People's Party (EPP), Vilimsky said Hungary's ruling party and its leader "did not fit in" a party that has Jean-Claude Juncker and Manfred Weber among its leaders. These are politicians who want to have Europe disappear, they are the ones to be blamed for mass migration, he said. Vilimsky said Fidesz would have a better place in the EP's Europe of Nations and Freedom Group, a decision about which should however be up to the ruling party, its leader, and the Hungarian people.

GOVT OFFICIAL: HUNGARY, BRITAIN, SCOTLAND ALL COMMITTED TO GUARANTEEING CITIZENS' RIGHTS

The governments of the United Kingdom, Scotland and Hungary are all fully open to guaranteeing citizens' rights, the state secretary for European affairs at the Prime Minister's Office told MTI. During his visit to the UK, Szabolcs Takács held talks with officials

of the Scottish and UK governments in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Takács said one of the main goals of his visit was to confirm to Hungarians in Scotland that the Hungarian government has considered it a priority since the start of the Brexit negotiations to preserve the acquired rights of Hungarians living in the UK.

HUNGARIAN, SERBIAN MINISTERS HOLD TALKS ON TRANSPORT

László Palkovics, Hungary's minister of innovation and technology, held talks with Zorana Mihajlović, the Serbian minister of construction, transport and infrastructure, in Belgrade.

The talks focussed on efforts to accelerate border crossing, joint railway development projects, including the upgrading of the Budapest-Belgrade railway, and the use of waterways connecting the two countries. "With the Budapest-Belgrade railway, the two countries will inscribe their names upon the pages of history of the forthcoming hundred years," Palkovics told a press conference. The minister stressed the need for Hungary and Serbia to synchronise construction works so as to guarantee smooth traffic on the railway line during the upgrade. The two sides agreed to set up a working group to put an end to administrative obstacles causing long delays at the border stations.