

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Tamás Solti

Dried pond in S Hungary Kakasd on World Water Day

UPCOMING EVENTS

Prime minister addresses Budapest migration conference

EP election campaign events

Hungarian-Polish Friendship Day events

World Water Day

TOP STORY

OFFICIAL: FIDESZ 'WON EPP BATTLE'

Hungary's ruling Fidesz emerged as the winner of this week's "battle in the European People's Party", a state secretary at the Prime Minister's Office said.

Speaking to public news channel M1, Balázs Orbán said the compromise made in Brussels would help the EPP. "The pro-migration branch of the EPP and the leftist parties backed by [US billionaire] George Soros failed to get Fidesz expelled," he said, adding that this had allowed the bloc to maintain its unity. It was ultimately Fidesz's proposal that the EPP approved, under which an inquiry committee will be formed with the Hungarian ruling party voluntarily suspending its rights in the grouping, Orbán said.

"Incidentally, the way I see it, membership in a European parliamentary party, from a Hungarian point of view – regardless of which party's membership we mean – is never a goal ... but a means for the ruling parties and the government to represent Hungary's interests in the European Parliament," the state secretary added. So the outcome of the debate will depend on how Hungary is able to represent its interests in the long run and in what form it will be able to find allies to protect Christian values and to stop migration, he said.

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NOVÁK: SUSPENSION OF TIES WITH EPP FIDESZ'S UNILATERAL DECISION

Hungary's ruling Fidesz made a unilateral decision to suspend its relations with the European People's Party (EPP) until the European parliamentary elections in May and will wait to see where "the series of attacks against Hungary" will go, the party's deputy leader in charge of foreign affairs said in Paris. Katalin Novák was in Paris as a member of a Hungarian delegation that held talks with the French parliament's French-Hungarian friendship chapter.

Speaking to MTI, she welcomed the appointment of a three-member council headed by former European Council president Herman Van Rompuy to monitor the situation in Hungary, saying it would allow them "to make a more authentic assessment of Fidesz's policies". Novák said the three-member committee Fidesz had appointed in response, to be headed by her, would hold regular consultations with the EPP to help them "have a clearer understanding" of Hungary's affairs. The Hungarian committee will be tasked with monitoring the situation after the EP ballot in May and assessing how the ruling party can most effectively represent the Hungarian people's interests [in Brussels], she said.

TIMMERMANS: EC 'SHARES CONCERNS' OVER RULE OF LAW IN HUNGARY

The European Commission shares the majority of concerns over the rule of law, human rights and corruption in Hungary, the commission's First Vice-President Frans Timmermans told the European Parliament's civil liberties committee (LIBE) in Brussels. The situation has not improved in the past few months, he said in connection with the current state of the European Union's Article 7 procedure launched against Hungary last year. Even additional problems have emerged, he said, noting the move of some Central European University's programmes to Vienna, amendments to the labour code and the planned administrative courts.

Addressing the session, Judith Sargentini, the Dutch MEP who last year compiled the report on the rule of law in Hungary, criticised Romania, the current rotating president of the EU, for foot-dragging on the issue. Hungary must be put on the agenda, Sargentini said, calling for a timetable of action with strict deadlines.

Addressing the meeting, Hungary's Kinga Gál, an MEP of the ruling Fidesz party, said concerns addressed by Timmermans were "unfounded" and she accused LIBE of using its meetings for political campaign purposes. Gál said Timmermans had strayed far from his duties, since the committee had not invited him to address a new

hearing concerning Hungary but to brief it on the current state of the Article 7 procedure. "This goes to show that the whole procedure lost objectivity long ago," the Fidesz MEP said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY TO BUILD CLOSE BUSINESS TIES WITH UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Hungary strives to build close economic ties with the United Arab Emirates, one of the countries "setting the pace for global economic change", Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said after a session of the Hungary-UAE joint business committee in Budapest. Cooperation between UAE and Hungarian firms will be promoted by way of a credit line of 630 million dollars set up by Hungary's Eximbank, Szijjártó said.

Szijjártó said the government has earmarked a total 21 billion forints to finance Hungary's participation in the 2020 World Expo in Dubai. Participation in the expo could help Hungarian water management technology firms to UAE markets, he said.

Szijjártó and Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansoori, his UAE counterpart, signed an agreement on cooperation in research and technology with special regard to renewable energies, GMO-free food products and automatic vehicles. Szijjártó noted that the UAE had opened an embassy in Budapest in January.

Trade between the two countries has jumped by 14 percent in 2018 to exceed 240 million dollars, he said. Hungary will participate in training experts for the UAE's first nuclear power plant to start operation next year. Further, it is set to offer 100 grants to UAE students in Hungary, Szijjártó said.

Mansoori noted that UAE entrepreneurs are already present in Hungary, especially in the hotel business. He suggested that the two countries sign an agreement on promoting small and medium-sized businesses.

ACADEMICS DEMONSTRATE FOR RESEARCH FREEDOM

A demonstration was held in Budapest in support of the academic freedom of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) and against plans to split the institution. After protesting outside the Academy's headquarters, the demonstrators moved on to the innovation and technology ministry (ITM), where a petition was handed over.

MTA researcher Emese Szilágyi, the protest's organiser, said a plan to hive off the institution's research network from the Academy should be prevented, adding that the institute's leaders had received a letter demanding they hold off from implementing the plan. The ITM minister has not yet responded to the question of why the government

intends to sever the research network from the Academy, she said. The joint declaration of intent signed by the ITM and the MTA on March 8 cannot be seen as a compromise, she said, referring to the document in which the Academy's head acknowledges the government's plan to separate the research network from the rest of the institution's operations.

HANKOOK TIRE WORKERS, MANAGEMENT REACH DEAL ON PAY, ENDING STRIKE

Unions association VDSZ reached an agreement with management of Korean-owned Hankook Tire Magyarország over wages late on Thursday, ending a strike that started a little more than one week earlier. The management agreed to raise wages by another 8.5% over an increase announced early in March, VDSZ told MTI.

Hankook announced a 13.6% wage rise following a two-hour warning strike on March 6, but union representatives complained the unilateral increase was performance based and would favour new hires over long-time employees. VDSZ said workers that would have fared the worst under that wage increase will now earn 18.5% more at year-end compared to a year earlier.

VDSZ chairman Tamás Székely said there was a turnaround at the talks after Hungarian members of the management were circumvented

and union representatives made progress with the Korean managers. He said about 70% of the workers at Hankook's plant in Rácalmás, in central Hungary, participated in the strike.

HUNGARIAN ART NOUVEAU IN SPOTLIGHT AT BRUSSELS EXHIBITION

Hungarian Art Nouveau is featured through works by the Artists' Colony of Gödöllő at an exhibition that has opened in the Balassi Institute in Brussels. The community was founded in 1901 by painter friends Aladár Körösfői-Kriesch and Sándor Nagy in the town of Gödöllő, a then popular royal summer residence near Budapest. It later became the most renowned group of Hungarian Art Nouveau. Members of the community were active in all fields of art; besides their major works they also designed unique, artistically-designed applied art objects. They created an exquisite work of wall-decorations in fresco, glass painting and mosaics graffiti. They ran a reformed lifestyle with vegetarian meals, everyday sport, reformed clothing, natural medicine, classical and contemporary literary readings and home concerts.

Opening the exhibition, Hungarian Ambassador Tamás Kovács said the show creates a bridge between Belgian and Hungarian Art Nouveau. The programme is part of the Brussels Art Nouveau and Art Deco Festival.