

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



President Novák (C), Parl Speaker Kövér (R), PM Orbán (L) with recipients of state awards on the eve of March 15

MTI/Tiborllyés

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**European Parliament holds plenary session**

**Events related to the war in Ukraine**

**Events marking anniversary of 1848/49 revolution**

## TOP STORY

# ORBÁN GREETS HUNGARIANS ACROSS BORDER AHEAD OF NATL HOLIDAY

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán greeted Hungarians across the borders in a letter ahead of the March 15 national holiday.

The letter, in accordance with a tradition of several years, will be read out at several local events. March 15, 1848, has a special place in world history, Orbán said in the letter. "Even from a distance of 175 years, we remember with awe of the day of pure light when the Hungarian nation won its freedom without bloodshed, in peace and cooperation," it said. While Hungarians have shown many times that they are ready to fight when they are outnumbered, "we -- much like other nations -- prefer living in freedom to dying for it," Orbán said. In the present "terrible" times, "we need the compass of Hungarian freedom more than ever," he said. "We yearn for peace, we stand on the side of peace." While Hungary respects other nations, it expects the same from "Brussels, Washington and Kyiv", he said. "We see it as our moral duty to do all we can to silence the weapons, because this is the only way to guarantee the safety and livelihood of people in the Carpathian Basin," he said.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY CALLS FOR POSTPONING APPLICATION OF UKRAINE ETHNIC MINORITY LAW**

The Hungarian government has applied to the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities for help in its effort to have a Ukrainian law postponed under which "minority schools in Ukraine would in effect be closed down", Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in the Hague on Tuesday. Following talks with High Commissioner Kairat Abdrakhmanov, the foreign ministry quoted Szijjártó as saying that the Hungarian government had made a decision at the outbreak of the war "not to raise the issue of curbing the rights of Transcarpathia Hungarians before the conflict ends" and "kept to that decision as long as it was possible but the recent, contested law has even worsened the situation of the Hungarian national community". Ukraine currently has 99 Hungarian primary and secondary schools which would become Ukrainian state schools from September, Szijjártó said, adding that students could no longer take their secondary school final exams or university entrance examinations in their mother tongue, and vocational training in Hungarian would also be terminated. From the 5th grade on, the classes taught in Hungarian would be reduced to 20 percent, and universities would be

stripped of their right to select their language of education, Szijjártó said. Szijjártó noted Hungary's helping Ukrainian refugees opening "1,300 kindergartens and schools" and said "meanwhile in Transcarpathia 100 Hungarian schools are banned from going on as schools teaching children in Hungarian". "This is obviously unacceptable and shameful ... this is a case against which international organisations and the European Union must or should act up," the minister insisted. The OSCE High Commissioner has always treated the issue with sympathy and has "always been ready to view the matter factually rather than in line with political expectations or ideologies," Szijjártó said. "He made it clear that the situation was clearly unacceptable and in conflict with international regulations," Szijjártó added. The Hungarian government continues to stand by ethnic kin in Ukraine, "many of whom have been conscripted and died on the front," Szijjártó said.

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## **ORBÁN MEETS MACRON IN PARIS**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and French President Emmanuel Macron met in Paris late on Monday to discuss bilateral ties and the most important aspects of the future of Europe, the PM's press chief said on Tuesday. Orbán said Hungary wants an immediate ceasefire and peace talks in Ukraine, Bertalan Havasi said.

Hungary has been pro-peace since the start of the war and will stay so, Orbán said. Orbán also had talks with former French president Nicolas Sarkozy, focusing on Hungary-France bilateral relations and international issues such as the war in Ukraine and European politics.

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## **NOVÁK GREETES ARTISTS, SCIENTISTS RECEIVING STATE HONOURS**

Hungarians have been bound together by their wish for a free and independent Hungary for generations, President Katalin Novák said in her speech at a ceremony in Parliament on Tuesday, where the Széchenyi and Kossuth prizes and the Orders of Merit of the Republic of Hungary were presented. "We Hungarians must build on what has maintained us for a thousand years: the Christian faith and our love of the nation will show us the way even at times of change, trouble or triumph," she said at the event held a day ahead of Hungary's national holiday on March 15. These days, preserving and renewing personal, family and national identity "is not only a life-vest in the storms around us but also the means to prosperity," she said. The love of the country has motivated those who are being awarded today for their achievements in arts, science or public service, Novák said. "We are proud and grateful to you for achieving professional merit and fame not only for yourselves but for the entire nation," she said.

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## **GULYÁS: MARCH 15 UNIVERSAL CELEBRATION OF HUNGARY'S FREEDOM**

March 15 "is once and for all the universal celebration of Hungarian freedom", Gergely Gulyás, the head of the Prime Minister's Office, said at a ceremony handing over state awards on the occasion of Hungary's national holiday on Tuesday. Gulyás said at the event held in the Várkert Bazaar that March 15 rightly filled all Hungarians with pride. It is the commemoration of Hungarians able to shape the nation and demonstrate "their instinctive wish for freedom and national unity", he added. The revolution 175 years ago marked the birth of civic Hungary, he said. In March 1848, the people's revolution was victorious in Budapest, as bourgeois Hungary supplanted "creaking feudalism", he said, adding it was at this time that the Hungarian nation and a civic Hungary were born. Also, March 15 marks the day when decades of reform era that flourished in the Hungarian national consciousness was fulfilled. The fight for freedom gave Hungarians a capacity for hope, and the knowledge that freedom "is not given free of charge, but we have always had to fight for it," he said.

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## **KÖVÉR INAUGURATES BUST OF REVOLUTIONARY POET PETŐFI IN SLOVENIA**

László Kövér, the speaker of parliament, inaugurated a bust of 19th century

poet and revolutionary Sándor Petőfi with Urška Klakočar Zupančič, his Slovenian counterpart, in Kranj, in western Slovenia, on Monday. In his speech at La Ciotat Park, home to a bust of France Prešeren, who penned Slovenia's national anthem, Kövér said that though Petőfi and Prešeren had never met, their ethos had now symbolically found one another through their statues.

Kövért thanked the city of Kranj for joining the inauguration of Petőfi's bust on the poet's 200th birth anniversary and the 175th anniversary of the 1848-49 revolution and freedom fight and for the opportunity to honour the memory of Prešeren. The speaker said that in the first half of the 19th century the Hungarian and Slovene nations had "suffered in the servitude of the same western empire", adding that their poets "were the most eloquent spokesmen of the desire for freedom". Petőfi's and Prešeren's message to Hungarians and Slovenes is that they should never expect freedom to be given to them by western or eastern empires, "because empires can only have subjects who can be deceived, humiliated and robbed at any time", Kövért said. Freedom for Hungarians and Slovenes in the form of political, economic and cultural self-determination can only come from the democratic Hungarian and Slovenian national states and their cooperation, he said. Klakočar Zupančič said the long-standing friendship between Slovenia and Hungary was made stronger by the care they provide to

the ethnic Hungarian and Slovene communities in each other's countries. She congratulated Kövér and Hungary on the occasion of the anniversary of the freedom fight.

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## **POTÁPI: GOVT TO COMPLETE ALL INVESTMENT PROJECTS STARTED IN CARPATHIAN BASIN**

The government will complete all investment projects already started throughout the Carpathian Basin, the state secretary in charge of policies for Hungarian communities abroad said on Monday. Árpád János Potápi said at the opening of a daytime care facility for children in Odorheiu Secuiesc (Székelyudvarhely) that large investment projects are not planned to be started this year, but all projects that have already been started including nurseries, kindergartens, schools, university projects, church renovation and community venues, will be completed. The government launched a Carpathian Basin kindergarten development programme in December 2016 which is currently in its fourth phase, he said. The government has allocated over 56 billion forints (EUR 147m) for regions beyond the borders which enables the construction of 153 new kindergartens and nurseries, and revamps in 720 institutions, he added. Investment projects in Transylvania are implemented in partnership with the association of Hungarian teachers in Romania (RMPSZ) and

Hungarian historical churches, with the involvement of local councils, he said. Some 368 investment projects are currently under way from total funding of 6.3 billion forints, he said.

### **GOVT PRE-FINANCING EU HORIZON RESEARCH 'THREATENED BY BRUSSELS'**

The government is pre-financing research programmes of those Hungarian universities involved in EU Horizon collaborations, the Ministry of Culture and Innovation (KIM) said on Tuesday, adding that the move is to counteract "a discriminatory decision by Brussels" to withhold the related funding. The government is providing 5 billion forints (EUR 13m) immediately, according to the ministry's statement. "Brussels is abusing its powers and punishing universities, lecturers and students..." the statement said in connection with 12 applications from 9 universities.

### **VARGA: EU RECOVERY FUNDING 'SLOW, CUMBERSOME'**

The distribution of European Union recovery funding has been "extremely cumbersome and slow", Mihály Varga, the finance minister, said in Brussels on Tuesday. Varga said the European Commission's assessment of the funding so far had been "unreasonably optimistic". Arriving at the meeting of EU finance and economy ministers,

Varga told MTI that Hungary's experience of recovery funding had been severely problematic, with only one-fifth of the funds having been allocated. Five EU member states have yet to receive recovery funding, he said, adding that competition and the economic opportunities between countries were seriously distorted as a result. The minister said that borrowing within the framework of recovery funding had also proved tricky, and only a small number of member states had succeeded in tapping this money. Varga pointed to a "lack of trust" in the European Commission's handling of the facility, adding that "this type of joint borrowing" would be "unnecessary" in the future. Joint borrowing, he added, had a detrimental effect on the ability of countries that manage their public debt and finances independently to access such market financing. Meanwhile, on the topic of the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank, Varga stated said Hungarian banks were well-capitalised and fresh credit ratings found the Hungarian banking system to be strong. "The current situation is something we can face calmly..." he said.

### **FIDESZ MEP VOWS TO 'PROTECT CHILDREN AGAINST ALL ATTACKS'**

Tamás Deutsch, an MEP of ruling Fidesz, on Tuesday said they would "protect children against all intrigue and gender jihadist attacks", adding

that "it is parents' inalienable right to educate their children." Tamás Deutsch's statement came in response to Momentum MEP Katalin Cseh's appeal earlier on Tuesday, who asked her peers to convince their member states to join the European Commission's lawsuit against Hungary, in an attempt to force the latter to repeal law amendments which the EC sees as discriminatory against the LGBTQ community. Speaking to Hungarian reporters in Strasbourg, Deutsch said "the Hungarian Dollar Left, as gender jihadists, are increasingly aggressive against Hungarian children and parents." He called Cseh's appeal "shameful". "As a Hungarian MEP, she has taken active political steps to have other countries' governments attack her homeland." He slammed Cseh for "siding with the gender madness and LGBTQ propaganda that would sensitise children in schools and kindergartens."

Earlier on Tuesday, Fidesz's press chief accused Cseh of campaigning against Hungary in the EP with the aim of getting Hungary's child protection law taken off the statute book. In a video statement on Tuesday, István Hollik referred an "astonishing" correspondence in the press in which Cseh appeals to fellow MEPs to convince their countries to join the lawsuit between the European Commission and Hungary on the side of the commission with a view to abolishing the child protection law. The ruling party politician said Cseh "and the Dollar Left" had set aside the

opinion of “millions of people who responded in the referendum” on the law “making it clear that children must be protected”. Cseh’s letter, he added, also indicates her open support for LGBTQ organisations and their campaign against Hungary’s legislation. Hollik said the government would “protect our children from gender propaganda”. The sex education of children is the business of parents alone, he added.

### **SOCIALISTS CALL FOR 'STRONG, UNITED EUROPE'**

Gábor Harangozó, deputy head of the opposition Socialist Party, advocated a “strong, sovereign, and united Europe” at a press conference published on Facebook on Tuesday, following a recent meeting of European Socialist leaders in Warsaw. The Socialist party is committed to reinforcing European integration, and “concerned to see that Hungary is falling in the trap of nationalist selfishness and narrowmindedness”. He insisted that stronger and more complex cooperation in Europe could help remove economic and security dependencies. Concerning the Ukraine war, Harangozó said “Russia cannot win and the perpetrators must be brought to court”, adding that Europe needed a new security system. Europe should become a “sovereign and attractive centre” based on “a fair distribution of welfare and strong social cohesion”. Everybody in Europe must be

“capable of having a good life out of their work”, he added. Harangozó also called for a common eastern Europe policy for the EU as well as further accelerating the EU’s enlargement.

### **PÁRBESZÉD: PARLT COMMITTEE DECLINES PROBE INTO STATS OFFICE 'DATA LEAK'**

Parliament’s judicial committee has voted down a proposal to launch an investigation into how sensitive data “was leaked” from the Central Statistical Office in February, Tamás Mellár, a deputy of the opposition Párbeszéd party, told a press conference on Tuesday. Mellár said the embargoed statistics had been obtained by a government commissioner, whereas such data could only be sent legally to the prime minister, the ministers, and the governor of the central bank before publication. On another subject, Mellár voiced incomprehension that parliament’s economic committee had discussed a draft statement marking the first anniversary of the Ukraine war. “This is not an economic issue but a political memorandum,” he said. Concerning the proposed document, Mellár said “it is a shameful memorandum, unacceptable for any good-intentioned Hungarian,” adding that “interrupting the Russia-Ukraine war now unconditionally with a ceasefire ... is distinctly a Russian scenario.” Peace talks could only be possible if Russia withdrew from the occupied territories, he insisted.

### **UKRAINE CRISIS - OVER 8,000 REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON MONDAY**

Fully 4,324 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Monday, while 4,007 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 24 people, ORFK said on Monday. Budapest received 61 people, 26 children among them, who arrived by train.

### **HUNGARY JAN CONSTRUCTION OUTPUT FALLS 3.6%**

Output of Hungary’s construction sector fell by an annual 3.6% in January, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Tuesday. Output of the buildings segment dropped by 4% and civil engineering output fell by 2.1%.

In absolute terms, construction sector output was worth 348.7 billion forints in January. The buildings segment accounted for 64.4% of the total.

### **HUNGARY JAN INDUSTRY OUTPUT DOWN 0.2% YR/YR**

Industrial output in January eased by an annual 0.2%, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Tuesday, quoting detailed data. Adjusted for the number of working days, output dropped by 3.2%. Month

on month, output fell by 5.1%, based on seasonally and working day-adjusted data. Output of the automotive industry, Hungary's biggest manufacturing sector, grew by an annual 20.3% in January, slowing from a rise of 34.5% in the previous month. The electrical equipment segment grew by 43.5% year on year. Output of the food, drinks and tobacco segment fell by 12.2%.

**POLICE UNCOVER SLOVAK-HUNGARIAN DRUG DISTRIBUTION GANG**

A drug distribution gang has been uncovered in western Hungary and the Zitny ostrov region of south-western Slovakia in a joint operation between Hungarian police and the Slovak national crime agency, with two alleged gang leaders apprehended. The Hungarian Rapid Response Police National Bureau of Investigation said on the police.hu website on Tuesday that efforts had been under way for several years "to fight the distribution of a popular Slovak drug informally known as piko". "The production of methamphetamine under the name

Pervitin has a tradition going back to many decades in Slovakia, with the drug being supplied to neighbouring countries including Hungary," it said.

Fully ten people were taken in custody in a joint operation involving 90 officers in Győr, Tatabánya and Oroszlány last weekend, it added. Investigators seized crystal meth, 8,000 euros and 1.5 million forints (EUR 3,800) in cash and equipment used in a drug lab producing Pervitin. Simultaneously, police of the Slovak crime agency took action against five people and held house searches in western Slovakia. Hungarian police in Debrecen, Győr and Pécs took three people into custody and raided properties in seven locations on the second day of the operation. Members of the counter-terrorism unit TEK were also involved because information had been received about three perpetrators storing guns in their homes. In addition to drugs, a taser and five types of weapons were seized, including a sawn-off shotgun, a Zoraki pistol, a Mossberg pump-action shotgun and ammunition. Investigators in Győr have raised charges against a total of thirteen people suspected of drug dealing. A 30-year-old Slovak citizen

who allegedly headed the gang and his 25-year-old Hungarian female partner have been apprehended.

**MUMFORD AND SONS, LORDE, MACKLEMORE ANNOUNCED AS SZIGET HEADLINERS**

The Sziget music festival has added fifty performers to its lineup, including Mumford and Sons, Lorde, Macklemore, Bonobo, Arlo Parks, Yung Lean, Caroline Polachek and SG Lewis. The organisers said on Tuesday that the list of headliners is now full. The event to be held on August 10-15 will also feature Billie Eilish, David Guetta, Florence and the Machine, Foals, and Imagine Dragons, as announced earlier. Chief organiser Tamás Kádár said in a statement that preparations in cooperation with the metropolitan council of Budapest and the local council of Óbuda are also under way to prevent problems related to airborne dust that marred last summer's event. Water from the River Danube will be used if necessary to reduce dryness, and a special technology will be used to create a cover on the ground making use of air moisture, he added.

