

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Prime Minister Viktor Orbán marks the 175th anniversary of the 1848-49 revolution and freedom fight at the birthplace of national poet Sándor Petőfi in Kiskőrös (S)

UPCOMING EVENTS

PM Orbán attends Organisation of Turkic States summit in Ankara

Events related to the war in Ukraine

European Parliament holds plenary session

TOP STORY

ORBÁN HONOURS POET PETŐFI ON NATL HOLIDAY

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán marked the 175th anniversary of the 1848-49 revolution and freedom fight at the birthplace of Hungary's national poet, Sándor Petőfi, in Kiskőrös, in the south of the country, on Wednesday.

In a speech in front of the house where Petőfi was born 200 years earlier, Orbán said "all Hungarians have a little bit of Petőfi in them, and everything Hungarian is contained in Petőfi". He said the life of the revolutionary, whose poems every Hungarian has learnt to recite as schoolchildren, was "a 26-year trajectory through the Hungarian heavens that started deep in Hungary and ended on a trail of stars". March 15 marks the "birth of Hungarian freedom", and the "march of freedom" begins in Kiskőrös, he added. Hungarians consider Petőfi their greatest poet because he "contains both Hungarian fate and Hungarian genius", he said, noting that his works have been translated into more than 200 languages. Petőfi "died as he wrote: as an apostle of global freedom, in a battle for Hungary's freedom", he added. He said Petőfi had delivered an answer to the question of what gives greater meaning to finite life and to country and quoted from the poet's National Song: "Shall we be slaves or men set free? That is the question, answer me!"

ORBÁN: 'WE WILL NEVER ALLOW THE FLAG OF FREEDOM TO BE TWISTED OUT OF THE HANDS OF HUNGARIANS'

"The great march of Hungarian freedom, though it has sometimes taken some twists and turns and sometimes even run into dead ends over the past 200 years, is still going strong today," Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said, marking the 175th anniversary of the 1848-49 revolution and freedom fight at the birthplace of Hungary's national poet, Sándor Petőfi, in Kiskőrös, in the south of the country, on Wednesday. "And Sándor Petőfi is still with us in that march today," he added. "We see him rebel when strangers want to tell Hungarians how to live. We see him turning against the powers of the world who want to reintegrate Hungarians into a European superstate," he added. Orbán also noted that the poet had prefaced his "Twelve Points" of the Hungarian revolutionaries with "Let there be peace". "We owe it to him, and that is why we will never allow the flag of freedom to be wrenched out of the hands of Hungarians," he said.

GULYÁS: INDEPENDENCE, FREEDOM 'NATIONAL MINIMUM'

Hungary's freedom and independence are the foundation of real and durable national unity, and so it is the "national minimum", the head of the Prime

Minister's Office said in Veszprem, in western Hungary, on Wednesday, marking the 175th anniversary of the 1848-49 revolution and freedom fight.

Love of country and freedom are key to national unity, and a nation can persist as long as "we are ready to make sacrifices for our freedom and independence," Gulyás said. During the revolutions sweeping Europe 175 years ago, the freedom rooted in civic rights was a common European goal, he said. The movement demanded equal rights for nations and their citizens, as well as independence, constitutional institutions, responsible governments, free press and the end of serfdom, and equality before the law, he said. After "that flame was trampled", Hungary was the only one to fight the overwhelming force of an empire, he said. Although the freedom fight was later drowned in blood, it strengthened Hungarians' yearning for freedom, he said. The message of 1848 is that individual freedom does not exist without the freedom of the community, "a shackled nation doesn't have free citizens". Hungarians wish the same things they have wished for since state founder St Stephen: to be an independent nation that "can decide its own fate, the issues of its country and its alliances," he said. The European environment is "often hostile today, at a time when there is a war in a neighbouring country, because we want to preserve the living, organising values of God, homeland and family, at a time when the political expectation is to deny them," he said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARIANS 'STILL PEOPLE OF FREEDOM'

Hungarians are a "people of freedom" and can turn into "freedom fighters" if necessary, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Győr, in north-western Hungary, marking the 175th anniversary of the 1848-49 revolution and freedom fight on Wednesday. Accepting the title of honorary citizen of the city, Szijjártó said Hungary had emerged from all crises of the past 13 years stronger than before. The country delivered a "Hungarian response" to every ordeal, neither seeking "guidelines" nor trying to "meet expectations", but "looking only to national interests", he added. Hungary "climbed out of a hole" when the economy reached a low point because of the global financial crisis thanks to national cooperation, and has since built one of the fastest-developing economies in Europe, he said. Szijjártó said Hungary had been "overrun by migrant hordes who showed no respect for people living here" eight years earlier, while many in Europe wanted to strip the country of its right to decide "with whom we want to live". Even then, Hungary didn't sacrifice its freedom, but protected its borders, its citizens and "the right to decide with whom we're prepared to live together in this beautiful country", he said.

During the pandemic, Hungary resisted external pressure, insisting

that “saving lives is not a matter of politics or ideology”, he added. He said “great powers” have tried to “press” Hungary into the war, adding that nobody can “drag” the country into a war that “is not ours”. He said Hungary had also preserved its freedom with regard to which measures it decides to support or not support in Brussels. The government is leading the country “in the spirit of 1848”, he added. Szijjártó said that since taking a seat on the Győr municipal council 25 years earlier, at the age of 20, the city had become a “bastion of the automotive industry”, while the local Széchenyi István University had become an “intellectual hub” for the country.

ROMANIAN PM MARKS HUNGARIAN NATL HOLIDAY

Hungarians living in Romania are an asset to Romanian society through their active public participation, rich cultural heritage, traditions, cooperation and respect for the majority and their commitment to the European values of freedom and democracy, Romanian Prime Minister Nicolae Ciucă said on Wednesday, marking Hungary’s national holiday. In a message to ethnic Hungarians on the anniversary of the 1848-49 revolution and freedom fight, Ciucă said the holiday is an opportunity to “greet Hungarians living in Romania and to highlight their contribution to the country’s development and modernisation.” The Hungarian

minority helped the significant steps Romania has taken “towards building a democratic and inclusive society,” he said. Mature, democratic, European societies are marked by their support of national minorities’ culture and identity, he said. “Romania needs the creative energy, ideas and inspiration of all its citizens, regardless of ethnic, linguistic and religious origins,” he said.

Hunor Kelemen, the head of the ethnic Hungarian RMDSZ party, said in a statement that Transylvania Hungarians “never accepted oppression and worked on cooperation with the Romanian majority, building a future where there is a place for all ethnicities.” The revolutionaries’ call for peace, freedom and cooperation are still valid and must be fought for, he said. “What else could we wish for but peace, in the shadow of a war on our doorstep. We have stood for the same thing since the start of the war: that no country has the right to endanger another’s existence...”, he said.

KÖVÉR: ‘WE ARE READY TO PROTECT OUR FREEDOM’

“We are ready to protect the freedom that created and feeds the modern Hungarian nation and civic Hungary, and which the revolutionaries of 1848-49 fought for under the leadership of Lajos Kossuth,” Speaker of Parliament László Kövér said on Wednesday. Kövér told an event marking the 175th anniversary of the revolution in Monok, in northeast Hungary,

where Kossuth was born, that his democratic principles as Hungary’s governor and first finance minister were an inspiration not only in Hungary but also in Europe. Zsófia Koncz, parliamentary state secretary and ruling Fidesz MP of the region, said that Kossuth had made the meaning of freedom and democracy known around the world.

MINISTERS MARK MARCH 15 NATIONAL HOLIDAY

In today’s Europe, advocating for peace takes courage, Culture and Innovation Minister János Csák said at an event marking the anniversary of the 1848-49 revolution and freedom fight in Budapest on Wednesday. In his speech at the National Museum, Csák said “remembering our heroic predecessors, we proclaim proudly that Hungarians have been the people of freedom for the past 1,100 years”. Hungarians are the “survivors or even winners of history, not its victims”, because they have withstood all hardships and continue to prosper, he said. In the shadow of war, the importance of peace cannot be overstated, he said. “If this war is unleashed, it could destroy everything, even Europe.”

At a commemoration in Szombathely, in western Hungary, Defence Minister Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said Hungarians are again living “in an age of peril”. Addressing the event organised by the Klapka György Equestrian

Hungary Matters is an English-language newsletter produced and distributed by the Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA) with content provided by Duna Media Service Provider exercises copyright over all content. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, redistributed or transmitted without prior written permission from the publisher, with the exception of copies made by individuals for private use, educational purposes or scholarly research, provided that such transmissions do not exceed the extent justified by the purpose and are not aimed at financial gain, even indirectly, and the source name are indicated at all times.



Guard and Heritage Preservation Association, Szalay-Bobrovniczky said Hungary must stay out of the war in neighbouring Ukraine, but “keep the powder dry”. Although Hungary “stands on the side of peace”, it is building an army that is “modern and uses the latest technology”, while preserving Hungarian soldiers’ “ancient virtues”, such as those of the hussars who fought in 1848-49, he added.

Finance Minister Mihály Varga told an event in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár), in north-western Romania, that the revolution of 1848 marked the birth of institutional Hungarian freedom. He said the sacrifices of the heroes of the revolution could be reciprocated by strengthening and guaranteeing the nation’s independence and self-determination for future generations. “When we celebrate 1848, we Hungarians also celebrate a diverse Europe founded on autonomous nation-states,” the minister said. “We must defend our freedom ourselves, just as we had to in 1848 and after the two world wars, and as we must do so today on new fronts.”

Addressing an event in Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy), Romania, Justice Minister Judit Varga said Hungarians “say no to the concept of European empire” and are “insistent on keeping their freedom won through the sacrifice of blood”. Varga said the interests of Hungarians living inside the country and outside of its borders “come first”. She warned that a “hegemony of opinion” is taking shape in Europe and said the European

Union is “uniting on the matter of self-censorship, not diversity”. She added that Brussels’ response to the war in Ukraine has “failed”. Hungarians today, as their predecessors in 1848, want peace, freedom and understanding, she said.

FIDESZ MEPS CALL FOR EUROPEAN PEACE PLAN

The MEPs of ruling Fidesz are calling for the drafting of a European peace plan to replace the “failed sanctions policy” and weapons deliveries to Ukraine, MEPs Kinga Gál and Tamás Deutsch said in Strasbourg on Wednesday. Speaking ahead of a plenary session of the European Parliament preparing for a European Union summit at the end of the month, Gál said European decision-makers failed to discuss peace even as the number of victims was climbing. European leaders, EP President Roberta Metsola among them, urge further weapon deliveries and a joint purchase of weapons, she said. That threatens the EU with being dragged into the war, and raises the spectre of a world war, she warned. “We need to broker peace to save lives and forestall further destruction. The conflict has only one solution: a ceasefire and peace talks,” Gál said.

Deutsch said Hungary’s was the “only pro-peace approach in a sea of slogans for war, sanctions and weapon deliveries”. Hungary and the Vatican stand together on their position for peace, he added. The EU should take active diplomatic steps in the

interest of a ceasefire, peace talks, and ultimately peace, rather than promoting an “utterly failed” policy of sanctions and weapon deliveries, he said. To achieve that, Europe should draft a peace plan, he added.

Regarding the corruption scandal affecting the European Parliament, he said corruption in Brussels was “systemic”, affecting the operation of EU institutions, and called for “every detail” of the scandal to be brought to light. He added that “no meaningful steps” had been taken by any EU institutions on the matter, while the EP president rejected as “unnecessary” a proposal by Fidesz MEPs to adopt asset declarations of the kind the European Commission had found suitable for use in Hungary. Until European institutions resolve the matter of corruption in Brussels, “we will not accept any lecturing from any EU institutions on corruption”, he added.

FIDESZ MEP CALLS FOR EU MIGRATION POLICY FOCUSED ON BORDER PROTECTION

The European Union needs to introduce a new migration policy centred on border protection, Fidesz MEP Balázs Hidvéghi said in Strasbourg on Wednesday. It should be made clear that Europe will not tolerate illegal entry onto its territory, Hidvéghi told Hungarian reporters during a break in a plenary session of the European Parliament. Europe must fundamentally change its approach to

migration in order to prevent further human tragedy on the Mediterranean, while migrants residing in the EU illegally need to be repatriated, he added. The latest data show even more migrants are trying to enter the EU now than during the 2015 migration crisis, he said. Rather than “attacking” member states that protect the bloc’s frontier, the EU should ensure that its laws are respected, he added.

HUNGARIAN NATIONAL HOLIDAY MARKED IN POLAND

Hungary’s March 15 national holiday commemorating the 1848-49 revolution and freedom fight was marked in Poland with an award ceremony, a panel discussion and an academic competition on Wednesday. At a ceremony in Warsaw, Orsolya Zsuzsanna Kovács, Hungary’s ambassador to Poland, was presented with an award in recognition of her efforts to promote Polish-Hungarian partnership. In Wroclaw, in western Poland, a panel discussion was held on the revolutions of 1848 with the participation of Hungarian, Polish and German experts. The event was organised by the local Hungarian and German diplomatic missions, the Polish-Hungarian Association of Wroclaw and the Liszt Institute of Warsaw. Around 2,200 students from 315 secondary schools participated in a nationwide academic competition on the history of Polish-Hungarian relations.

OPPOSITION MARKS NATIONAL HOLIDAY

Hungary’s opposition parties marked the 175th anniversary of the 1848-49 revolution and freedom fight on Wednesday.

Jobbik-Conservatives leader Márton Gyöngyösi marked the national holiday at an event in Budapest, stating that there were similarities between Hungary’s situation 175 years ago and today, and the goal is that the country should not fall out of the group of European nations but develop together with them. He told the event at the Batthyány Eternal Flame monument near Parliament that Hungary had always belonged to the west of Europe culturally, and the majority of Hungarians agreed that it should not fall out from “the bloodstream of the continent”.

LMP co-leader Péter Ungár said in a video on Facebook that the message of the revolution and freedom fight was that there were things worth fighting for. He said it was important to remember the revolution and freedom fight because it marked the birth of a modern, civic Hungary. It was a time when the country’s independence and autonomy developed into its current form, he added. The foundations of current politics were laid, enabling every person to have an equal say to influence politics, he said.

Bence Tordai, the co-leader of opposition Párbeszéd, said the revolutionaries of the current era

were the greens because they wanted peace, freedom, consensus and a green Hungary. Tordai said in a video message that March 15 was a holiday that stood the test of time because it concerns some basic principles, such as liberty, equality and fraternity. “Hungarians went against oppression in 1848 because they dreamed about a freer and more liveable country, and said no to everything that resulted from oppression and despotism,” he said.

The Socialist Party said March 15 was a celebration of social development, “real national issues” and European progress. Ágnes Kunhalmi, the party’s co-leader, slammed the Orbán government, saying that “Prime Minister Viktor Orbán created a web of a million dependencies in Hungary, hobbling social progress, development and modernisation”. “Neither progress, nor true national representation, nor progressive European principles” are typical attributes of the government, she said. Hungarians actively shaped European events in 1848, she said. Today’s Hungary should become a cooperative and sovereign country where freedom and prosperity are equally present, she said.

Addressing a party gathering, Ferenc Gyurcsány, leader of the Democratic Coalition (DK), urged people to “dare to fight” for their freedom. Gyurcsány warned that otherwise people would “be disenfranchised and become the shame of the nation”. He said DK would become “the home” for those

opposed to governing Fidesz. “DK follows a sensible, patriotic European policy with principles that are simple: people are free and must watch out for that freedom. Furthermore, the strong may not abuse their power, while the weak must be helped, because they’re people too,” he said. Gyurcsány said people must “fight tyrants, not negotiate with them”.

Anna Donáth, an MEP of Momentum, said the young revolutionaries of 1848 “took control of their fate” by forming a community of people who valued freedom and the nation. Every generation has a right and a duty to “take control of its fate”, Donáth told an event. “What else are these national holidays about but remembering those who did everything they could for the future so that we could be freer, happier, more honest and more credible?” she asked. Although Hungary’s

freedom fights throughout history “never ended with the most positive outcomes”, they were not fought in vain, she said, “because we’re here and so are the new generations”.

MI HAZÁNK MARKS NATL HOLIDAY, HOLDS PEACE DEMO

Opposition party Mi Hazánk staged a peace demonstration and marked the anniversary of Hungary’s 1848-49 revolution and freedom fight in Budapest on Wednesday. Addressing the event, László Toroczkai, the leader of the radical party, said today’s Hungary was not the kind the revolutionaries had envisioned in 1848, adding that a major power was “again behaving like an occupier” in the country. Toroczkai said Hungary must not be dragged into a war of great powers, while foreign troops

must not be deployed in the country and Hungarians must not be taken abroad, either. Hungary’s long-term goal should be to become a neutral country like Austria, Toroczkai said, adding that this also requires a strong military to ensure the country’s defence if it leaves NATO. A strong military also requires a strong economy, he said.

OVER 8,500 UKRAINE REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON TUESDAY

Fully 4,790 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Tuesday, while 3,756 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 59 people, ORFK said on Wednesday. Budapest received 38 people, 14 children among them, who arrived by train.