

Weekly Media Review of Hungarian Communities Abroad

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Viktor Orbán: Hungarian politicians are the target of a political campaign in Romania

Speaking at the customary conference for heads of missions held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said that Hungarian politicians in Romania are the target of an ongoing political campaign. Evaluating Hungary's relations with its neighboring countries, Mr. Orbán said that Romania wants to overshadow the leaders of Hungarian minority political life, and this must be opposed with the appropriate means and force. As previously reported, last year the Romanian National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA) launched criminal proceedings against several Hungarian leaders in Szeklerland. The mayor of Gyergyószentmiklós/Gheorgheni János Mezei and the mayor of Sepsiszentgyörgy/Sfântu Gheorghe, Árpád Antal were barred from public office, while the mayor of Csíkszereda/Miercurea Ciuc Róbert Ráduly resigned from his post after he had been charged. In reaction to the Hungarian prime minister's words, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement, stressing that Romanian justice is impartial.

On Monday, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán held talks with the president of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) Hunor Kelemen in Parliament on Transylvanian Hungarians' programs focusing on the strengthening of Hungarian identity. The parties stated that it is important that Hungarians in Transylvania emerge from the domestic affairs disputes accompanying the Romanian elections scheduled for this year in a stronger position, and that this is also reflected in their representation in local governments and in Parliament. Mr. Kelemen presented the Prime Minister with the most important draft development programs aimed at preserving the identity of Hungarians in Transylvania and at vitalizing cultural life there.

The Hungarian government allocates 150 million HUF to supporting sister city programs

On Tuesday, speaking at a press conference in Budapest, State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Árpád János Potápi announced that the Hungarian government is allocating 150 million HUF (EUR 483,000) to supporting sister city cooperation and programs. The state secretary added that municipalities can submit their applications between March 1 and 31. Mr. Potápi added that the aim of the program, which is being run for the second time, is to enhance relations between the municipalities and cities of Hungary and those of Hungarian communities living in neighboring countries, as well as to strengthen Hungarian national identity through sister city cooperation programs.





Klaus Iohannis has rescinded the “Star of Romania” state decoration bestowed on László Tőkés

President of Romania Klaus Iohannis has rescinded the “Star of Romania” state decoration bestowed on retired Reformed Church pastor and outstanding representative of Transylvanian Hungarians, MEP László Tőkés. The President announced his decision at a press conference held on Thursday afternoon. László Tőkés received the state merit in 2009 from the Romanian President Traian Basescu, for his historic role in the 1989 Revolution which led to the change of regime. In November 2013, the Romanian Council of Honor found Mr. Tőkés “unworthy” of the “Order of the Star of Romania” and initiated withdrawal of the merit, after Mr. Tőkés asked Hungary to establish a “system of national cooperation” that would offer “protectorate” status to Transylvania. According to the final decision of the Romanian Supreme Court, which was announced on 25 February, the Supreme Court rejected the appeal submitted in the issue. The President did not justify his decision, but implied that Mr. Tőkés had not respected the Romanian Constitution. Mr. Iohannis said that “When the state of Romania decorates someone, it wants to recognize his achievements. However, the laureate must recognize Romania, the Romanian Constitution and the values forming the basis of the Fundamental Law.”

Speaking at a press conference held in Nagyvárad/Oradea after the announcement of the President’s decision, Mr. Tőkés said that by rescinding the state decoration, Klaus Iohannis and the Council of Honor have questioned Romania’s right to offer protectorate status to Romanians living outside Romania. Mr. Tőkés said that the only thing he has done is say that a kin-state should offer protectorate to its national minorities, as Austria did in the case of South Tyrol.



Only seven Hungarians have won seats in the Slovakian Parliament

According to the results of the Slovakian parliamentary elections which were held on 5 March, Hungarians will not have an effective representation in the Slovakian parliament. Four years ago the Hungarian-Slovakian mixed party Most-Híd (Bridge) won 13 seats at the beginning of the government term, while by the end it had 14. At the same time, Most-Híd did not stand up for Hungarian issues effectively. Now it will have 11 representatives in Parliament, including 7 Hungarians; therefore, no breakthrough is likely to take place. The Party of the Hungarian Community (MKP) received 4.04 percent (105,495 votes), therefore it must continue its work for assertion of Hungarians’ interests outside Parliament. A factor which led in part to the MKP’s lack of success is the fact that turnout in Southern Slovakia – a region inhabited mostly by Hungarians – was significantly lower than that in Northern Slovakia. The general turnout across the country was 59.81 percent in the election. Altogether eight parties will have seats in the Parliament. Evaluating the results, the head of the MKP József Berényi said that the election produced no winners, but the Hungarian community in Slovakia “was defeated.” According to the election results, both the



MKP and Most-Híd became weaker than before. Mr. Berényi added that if Most-Híd had accepted the MKP's proposal of cooperation, Southern Slovakia would have had a strong Hungarian representation.

The tour of the “2016 – the year of young Hungarian entrepreneurs abroad” program starts in Dunaszerdahely

The State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad at the Prime Minister's Office – in partnership with the Design Terminal – is organizing a Carpathian Basin tour between March and May as part of the “2016 – the year of young Hungarian entrepreneurs abroad” program. During the tour, the organizers will visit 14 venues. The first stop on the tour will be Slovakia's Dunaszerdahely/Dunajska Streda. Further stops will include Rimaszombat and Kassa as well. The aim of the tour is to strengthen and support young Hungarian entrepreneurs and Hungarian companies abroad.



The date of provincial elections to be announced on 22 March

The president of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) and the Provincial House of Representatives of Vojvodina István Pásztor said that he will announce the date of provincial elections on 22 March. Mr. Pásztor added that by the end of the week he will have talks with the President of the Serbian National Assembly Maja Gojković, in order to finalize the date of provincial, local and parliamentary elections; these will take place on the same day. Concerning the participation of the VMSZ in the elections, Mr. Pásztor said that it will take part in the elections in coalition with the Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina and the Party of Hungarian Unity. He added that this cooperation is primarily at local level, while at provincial and national levels the latter two would support the VMSZ list.



Miklós Soltész: historic churches in Transcarpathia will receive more financial support from Hungary

Speaking at a press conference in Transcarpathia's Munkács/Mukachevo, State Secretary for Church, Ethnic and Civil Society Relations at the Ministry of Human Capacities Miklós Soltész said that this year the Hungarian government will increase the amount of financial support allocated for historic Transcarpathian Hungarian churches which aim to promote the permanence and spiritual life of Hungarians in Transcarpathia, as well as their strengthening as a community. During his one-day official visit in Transcarpathia, the state secretary held talks with the bishop of the Roman Catholic Church District of Munkács Antal Majnek. Mr. Soltész also made a visit to the St. Stephen Hungarian High School in Munkács, maintained by the Munkács diocese. The state secretary added that in 2016 the Hungarian government



will allocate HUF 32 million (EUR 103.200) to support Roman Catholic priests in Transcarpathia (this sum was HUF 16 million last year); Greek Catholic priests will receive HUF 9.6 million (30,000 EUR), instead of the former HUF 5.5 million (EUR 17,700) support. For Reformed church pastors, the former HUF 21 million (EUR 670,700) support will be increased to HUF 42 million (EUR 135,000).

