Expansion of temporary spent fuel rod storage proceeding as planned – RHK, the company in charge of managing radioactive waste in Hungary, said that the expansion of a temporary storage facility for spent fuel rods at nuclear power plant Paks, Hungary's only commercial source of nuclear energy, is proceeding as scheduled.

The temporary storage facility with the capacity to store 11,416 rods is almost 86 % full, but RHK signed a contract late last year for the construction of four more chambers that are expected to be completed by the spring of 2024. RHK expects 360 spent fuel rods to be placed in the facility each year, although it is licensed to take up to 500 annually.

The temporary storage facility was originally planned with a capacity to store 14,850 spent fuel rods in 33 chambers, but that was scaled up to 17,716 spent fuel rods because of the extension of the lifespan of the plant and other developments. The facility has 24 chambers at present: 16 with a capacity to store 450 rods apiece, and eight with a capacity to store 527 rods each. Nine more chambers with a capacity to store 703 rods apiece are being added to the facility.

NPP Paks has five operational Soviet-made VVER-440 reactors with power output of 500 MW each. In January 2014, Hungarian Government has signed deal with Russia`s Rosatom, with a goal to increase output of the power plant, from current 2,000 MW to 4,400 MW by adding two more reactors. Under the agreement, Russia will provide 10 billion euros loan for the construction of new unit in existing NPP, which is around 80 % of estimated construction cost. According to initial plan, first unit should become operational in 2023. However, In mid-January the European Commission released a report in which it states that Hungary has failed to provide sufficient information to support its argument that the agreement for the expansion of NPP Paks will not provide the company unfair economic advantage.