

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Péter Komka

László Búdi renovates pedal-operated toy cars in his hobby workshop

UPCOMING EVENTS

President Áder gives New Year's speech

New Year's Eve celebrations

TOP STORY

CROATIA COURT FINDS MOL CHIEF GUILTY

A Zagreb court has found Zsolt Hernádi, chief executive of Hungarian oil and gas company MOL, and former Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader guilty of corruption, Croatian public television reported.

Hernádi, who was found guilty of bribing Sanader with 10 million euros to obtain a majority stake in Croatian oil firm INA, was sentenced to two years in prison in absentia in a non-binding ruling. The former Croatian PM was handed a six-year prison term. MOL and Hernádi have denied the charges. MOL said it was "disappointed" with the verdict, as previous verdicts by the Hungarian courts and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) had all acquitted the company of any wrongdoing. The company noted that in 2015, Croatia's constitutional court had annulled Sanader's earlier conviction for accepting bribes relating to INA and ordered a new trial. It also noted the Budapest Municipal Court's refusal to execute a European Arrest Warrant for the MOL CEO, citing a "risk that [Hernádi's] right to a fair trial would be infringed". MOL rejected the charges and vowed to continue to defend itself against the "baseless accusations". MOL holds just under half of INA's shares but has management rights in the company. The other big stakeholder is the state of Croatia.

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MINIMUM WAGE TO RISE 8% NEXT YEAR

The minimum wages for both skilled and unskilled workers will rise by 8% next year, in line with an agreement reached a year earlier between unions, employers and the government, Finance Minister Mihály Varga has announced. The gross monthly minimum wage for skilled labourers will be at 210,600 forints (EUR 636) and the wage for unskilled labourers at 161,000 forints, Varga said. The VKF, a forum of employers unions and the government, agreed a year earlier to raise the minimum wage for skilled and unskilled workers by 8% in both 2019 and 2020. However, unions recently pressed for the scale of next year's increase to be raised, arguing that GDP growth had beaten expectations and that minimum wage growth is now under overall wage growth.

AUDIT OFFICE REVEALS IRREGULARITIES AT NATL PARKS, CALLS FOR CHANGES IN PUBLIC SECTOR INTERNAL CONTROLS

A series of irregularities have been revealed at national parks around Hungary, the State Audit Office said. Audits have been held at each of Hungary's ten national parks and it has been established that some national park directorates failed to fulfil the conditions for national and financial asset management, the statement said. The State Audit Office has submitted five

proposals to the minister of agriculture and additional ninety proposals to directors of the national parks to correct the irregularities, it added.

In a separate statement, citing the results of audits carried out between 2015 and 2018, the office said the current internal control system of the public sector fails to fulfil its purpose and a full review of the system was justified. The office revealed that internal controls did not work effectively in 90.7% of public institutions and 96.7% of local councils, and failed to help top leaders make clear decisions. It is the task of the minister in charge of public finances to initiate a review of the controls system, the audit office said.

SPECIAL NEEDS TEACHERS MISSING FROM SPECIAL EDUCATION

The number of students with special educational needs is growing faster than the number of teachers trained to work with such students, daily Népszava said. Human Resources Ministry figures for the 2019/2020 academic year showed 9,700 special needs teachers employed in public education, representing a drop from slightly over 10,000 in 2018, the paper said. At the same time, 2,300 more children were diagnosed with special needs this year than last, with their number reaching 93,800.

DIRECT FLIGHT TO BE LAUNCHED BETWEEN BUDAPEST, XI'AN

Shanghai Airlines is launching two direct flights a week between

Budapest and Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi province in central China, on Monday, the Xianyang International Airport said. The flights will operate on Mondays and Thursdays both ways, the airport said. With the new line, the number of flights between China and Hungary grows to ten.

DEBRECEN AIRPORT TO UNDERGO MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Eastern Hungary's biggest airport in Debrecen will see major developments in 2020, including the building of a new firehouse, revamping the terminal building and procurement of passenger safety equipment, Mayor László Papp told a press conference. The government is funding investment and development at the airport with 5.1 billion forints (EUR 15.4m), Papp said, with the municipality providing a quarter of the development funds. Speaking on the occasion of the airport receiving its 600,000th passenger, Papp noted that Debrecen had launched its first regular flights in 2012 and had grown to service 380,000 travellers in 2018 as the country's second biggest airport. The municipality regained a majority stake in the airport in 2019, Papp said. Next year, they are launching tenders for the design of a new runway and a new terminal to handle 1.5-2 million passengers a year, Papp said.