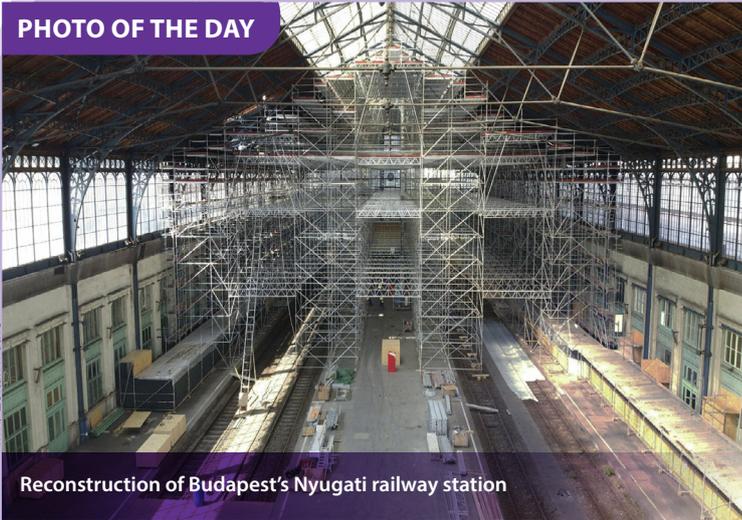


PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV Zoltán Máthé

Reconstruction of Budapest's Nyugati railway station

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office releases Jan-April wages, May industrial output figures

Semmelweis day marked

Parliament's judiciary committee meets

TOP STORY

MIGRATION PRESSURE 'INCREASING'

The pressure of migration on Hungary's southern border is growing significantly, according to the prime minister's chief security advisor.

Since the beginning of the year, 40% more illegal entry attempts have been reported from Hungary's southern borders than in the first half of 2019, György Bakondi told a press conference. In the first six months of 2020, a total 13,189 migrants tried to enter illegally, while procedures have been initiated against 161 suspected people smugglers, more than in the whole of last year, Bakondi said. He warned that some 150,000 migrants are staying in Greece, while "the pressure of migration is weighing more and more on Turkey and Italy, too". "Any easing [of immigration restrictions] could increase security and health risks for Hungary, trying welfare services and jeopardising jobs," Bakondi said. "Migrants are a potential hazard of coronavirus infection," Bakondi insisted, and went on to say that "they could further increase unemployment caused by the Covid-19 outbreak through occupying the remaining jobs". Bakondi urged residents to express support for government measures through returning the government's "national consultation" survey sheets.

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CHRISTDEMS ELECT SIMICKÓ GROUP LEADER

The co-ruling Christian Democrats (KDNP) have unanimously elected István Simicskó as their parliamentary group leader, KDNP leader Zsolt Semjén announced after a group meeting. Simicskó will take over from Péter Harrach on July 15. Harrach, who has been group leader since 2010, indicated earlier that he would step down after ten years of “frontline service”, Semjén said. Harrach will take up the post of deputy group leader. He said those ten years had been “the most fruitful decade of the past thirty years in parliament”, and that his party was “committed to building a strong Hungary”.

Simicskó said he would help his party go on with its “value-based policies”, adding that “ruling party group leaders will support the government”.

Meanwhile, ruling Fidesz re-elected Máté Kocsis as its group leader. Kocsis has held the post since May 2018.

OFFICIAL: HRW ‘IGNORING’ PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

Human Rights Watch (HRW) “neglects the fact that Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world”, State Secretary Tristan Azbej told public television M1. Azbej, who is in charge of Hungary’s assistance to persecuted Christian communities, reacted to critical remarks by HRW executive

director Kenneth Roth concerning the Hungarian government. Azbej referred to HRW as an organisation “associated with George Soros”. He insisted that such organisations have “never stood by victims of attacks with a migrant background” and they “never speak about the 200 million Christians being persecuted worldwide”. Azbej said that 3,000 people were killed last year because of their Christian faith, but “not only do these organisations decline to act up for persecuted Christians, they will... deny the suffering of millions of innocent people”.

SZIJJÁRTÓ DISCUSSES MIGRATION POLICY WITH ITALIAN COUNTERPART

Libyan stability is key to stopping illegal migration to the European Union, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said, before talks with Luigi di Maio, his Italian counterpart. Szijjártó told MTI the coronavirus pandemic was likely to trigger new waves of migration, and Libya presents the highest risk because of the ability of migrants to pass freely through its territory towards Europe. Its stability would help to keep illegal migration in check, he said. Boosting the Libyan coast guard is therefore a shared objective, he said. Failing that, “tens or even hundreds of thousands” of migrants may make their way to Europe, posing health and economic risks as well as cultural and security challenges, he said.

The jobs lost in Europe due to the coronavirus pandemic render earlier

arguments that migrants would be beneficial for the labour market “illogical and empty”, Szijjártó said. European governments and politicians should prioritise helping Europeans, and currently that involves pushing back against migrants targeting European jobs, he added. Italy is on the frontline of that fight, he said, and has so far received three times as many migrants in 2020 as it did in 2019, he said.

Regarding economic ties, Szijjártó noted that Italy is Hungary’s fifth largest trading partner, with trade exceeding 10 billion euros last year. The Hungarian Eximbank has opened a 450 million euro credit line to help Hungarian companies exporting to Italy, he said. On the topic of tourism, Szijjártó said the two countries coordinated continuously. Last year, some 550,000 Hungarians travelled to Italy, and Wizz Air is resuming flights to seven Italian cities from July, he noted. Travellers should continue to exercise caution, however, he warned.

TWO DUTCH MEN SENTENCED TO 5 YEARS FOR DRUG TRAFFICKING

Two Dutch men were sentenced to five years in prison for selling drugs at the Sziget music festival in 2019, the Budapest Municipal Court said. The two 23-year-olds were arrested at the 2019 festival on Budapest’s Hajógyári Island. Large amounts of marijuana and MDMA pills were seized from them, along with evidence of trafficking and

cash, the court said. After the two men pleaded guilty at the Monday hearing, the court sentenced them to five years in prison and expelled them from Hungary for four years. The ruling is not binding. The prosecution has appealed for a harsher sentence, the court said.

CZECH PEOPLE SMUGGLER ARRESTED IN W HUNGARY

A Czech national believed to have attempted to help six Syrians cross the Hungary-Austria border has been arrested, the western Hungarian chief prosecutor's office said. The man was apprehended near the Hungary-Slovenia-Austria border after he had picked up the six illegal migrants into his car. The suspect had charged the Syrians 1,000 euros each under promise of helping them reach Vienna.

LMP CONDEMNS GOVT, CRITICAL OF OPPOSITION IN ASSESSMENT OF PARLT SPRING

Assessing Parliament's spring session, opposition LMP condemned the government and also voiced criticism of the opposition. "We mustn't proceed in the same direction as we have done so far," group leader László Lóránt Keresztes told a press conference. "This is the greatest lesson of the novel coronavirus epidemic." He condemned the government's 2021 budget bill, insisting it failed to launch a new economic policy that could make the country independent.

Goods that satisfy basic needs should be produced locally instead of being imported from other continents, he added. He accused the cabinet of focusing on putting profits above all else while making employees increasingly vulnerable. The LMP politician said the government was failing to take action against climate change and its climate strategy was nothing more than an attempt to "legitimise" the expansion of the Paks nuclear power plant, he said. Keresztes said the government had repeatedly acted against national interests by, for instance, slapping the Budapest-Belgrade rail development project under secrecy laws. Even during the epidemic, it carried on politicising issues when the opposition offered cooperation, he added.

The LMP group leader, however, also blamed the opposition for making crude attacks against the government, adding that this stance had not improved public discourse. He also accused the opposition of failing to present a clear vision for the future. At the same time, Keresztes welcomed the national consensus on supporting the European citizens' initiative for protecting ethno-regions in the European Union.

FOUR CORONAVIRUS PATIENTS DIE, THREE NEW INFECTIONS IN HUNGARY

Four elderly patients with chronic underlying illnesses have died in the past 24 hours and the number of

registered novel coronavirus infections has risen by three to 4,145, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Monday morning. Fully 585 people have died and 2,685 have made a recovery, while the number of active infections stands at 875. Altogether 1,763 people are in official home quarantine and 273,987 tests have been carried out. A total of 170 coronavirus patients are in hospital, 9 of whom are on ventilators. Fully 38% of active infections, 60% of fatalities and 48% of recoveries have taken place in Budapest. The threat of an epidemic has not disappeared and a state of medical preparedness is in effect, the website said. It is compulsory to wear a face mask in shops and on public transport. Budapest has the highest number of infections (1,977), followed by Pest County (618), and the counties of Fejér (376), Komárom-Esztergom (307) and Zala (262). Békés and Tolna counties have the fewest, with 13 each.

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER DENIES ALLEGATIONS ABOUT HOSPITALS CUTTING NUMBER OF TESTS

Chief Medical Officer Cecília Müller dismissed remarks by an opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) lawmaker suggesting that hospitals were decreasing the number of novel coronavirus tests carried out. Müller told public news channel M1 that Zoltán Varga had "insufficient information" when he had accused her of "threatening" hospitals, telling

them that they would be made to pay for any unjustified tests carried out. Varga was cited as saying that Müller would be personally responsible for patients dying as a result of the lack of testing. Müller said it was not compulsory to test patients before all procedures but doctors were obliged to get patients tested for Covid-19 in case of any suspicion, "not only if they show symptoms or have just returned from abroad". She added that the epidemic was still present in Hungary and an information system had to be maintained which enabled immediate response in case of flare-ups.

HEALTH FUND: NUMBER OF PATIENTS WAITING FOR OPERATIONS DOWN 60% SINCE 2012

The number of patients that need to wait for operations has been reduced by some 60% since 2012, and waiting times have also been reduced, the head of national health fund manager NEAK told public television M1. Zsolt Kiss said that while 70,000 patients were on waiting lists in 2012, that number had gone down to 31,000 before the coronavirus outbreak and was further reduced to 23,800 by now. Kiss spoke highly of the performance of the health system, adding that urgent operations had not been postponed with regard to Covid-19. Most patients on current lists are waiting for knee- or hip replacement as well as cataract operations, Kiss said.

JUSTICE MINISTER INAUGURATES CENTRE FOR SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF CRIME

Justice Minister Judit Varga inaugurated a centre in Pécs, in southern Hungary, that provides free legal and financial aid, as well as psychological services, to victims of crime. Varga said the government plans to establish a network covering all counties within five years, and 600 million forints (EUR 1.7m) is available this year for developing and running victim support centres in Budapest, Szombathely, Miskolc and Pécs. The government continues to count on the cooperation of civil and church organisations in helping the victims of crime in Hungary, Varga said.

Regarding domestic violence, Varga said the state offers a range of services so that victims "feel they are not alone and can count on their community". A helpline and new website, vansegitseg.hu, provides information on local services, she said. Victims of domestic violence have access to safe houses, alongside legal and financial aid, as well as psychological support, she added.

Recent government measures to combat domestic violence and support victim protection include stricter parole regulations, a review of judicial practices in respect of crimes that threaten life, and amendments to the regulation of child protection services, Varga said. Hungary supports

the implementation of the European Commission's recently adopted strategy for protecting the rights of victims of crime, she added.

SWITZERLAND'S SENSIRION TO SET UP PLANT IN HUNGARY

Swiss sensor maker Sensirion announced plans to establish a production base in Debrecen, in eastern Hungary. The plant, being built and financed by a local "build-to-suit" partner, will meet growing demand for sensors.

Sensirion said it chose Debrecen because of the city's proximity to clients in Europe, the well-educated local workforce and support offered by the Hungarian Investment Promotion Agency (HIPA) and the Debrecen Urban and Economic Development Centre. "Debrecen's excellent infrastructure, especially education facilities such as the University of Debrecen and the vocational training institutions, combined with an established industrial base, was the decisive factor in Sensirion choosing to establish a new production site there," said Patrick Good, Sensirion's director for maintenance and infrastructure.

State Secretary Levente Magyar welcomed the announcement, saying that the government had "great plans" concerning Debrecen, which he referred to as "the fastest developing city" in Hungary.

Production at the site is expected to start by Q3 2021. Initially, the plant will employ about 50 people; however, starting in 2022 Sensirion will add newly engineered products and production technologies to its portfolio in Debrecen, raising headcount there by about fourfold by 2025.

**CORONAVIRUS CRISIS
RAISES ROLLING AVG
JOBLESS RATE TO 4.1%**

Hungary’s three-month rolling average jobless rate reached 4.1% in May, up 0.3 percentage point from the previous month and 0.7 percentage point from twelve months earlier, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said.

The rate covers unemployment among those between the ages of 15 and 74.

In absolute terms, there were 190,200 unemployed, 16,100 more than in the previous month and up 29,800 from a year earlier.

In a departure from its usual practice, KSH released data for the month of May alone showing the average number of jobless stood at 215,000, lifting the unemployment rate to 4.7%. In absolute terms, the number of jobless rose 28,000 from April and

was up 55,000 from the same month a year earlier.

KSH said it published the May data to better show the impact of the pandemic on the labour market, although it acknowledged that the numbers do not share the same degree of accuracy as the three-month rolling average figures.

KSH noted that data from the National Employment Service (NFSZ) show there were 363,000 registered jobseekers at the end of May, up more than 43% from twelve months earlier.

The state secretary for economic strategy of the Ministry of Innovation and Technology (ITM), László György, told a press conference after the data release that the government’s measures taken as part of the Economic Protection Action Plan were behind the positive data. The Hungarian jobless rate in the period, he said, was the fourth most favourable in the European Union. In May, there were 28,000 more unemployed, he said, adding that the number of inactive people on the labour market fell by 59,000 as many people made a return as emergency measures eased. Fully 31,000 of these started working and 28,000 showed up in the statistics, the state secretary

said. The number of registered jobseekers has been steadily decreasing for a second week. Since the wage subsidy was announced, the government has helped 24,000 people get a job, György said. Also, the number of job vacancies has risen significantly, he added.

**MATOLCSY OUTLINES
REFORMS FOR
COMING DECADE**

National Bank of Hungary (NBH) governor György Matolcsy outlined twelve reforms he said would be necessary to preserve and increase Hungary’s success in the coming decade in an op-ed piece published on the website novekedes.hu. “To mitigate and even to shape the dramatic turnarounds of our decade, we must implement reforms and turnarounds of a similar scale,” Matolcsy said in the piece, urging the reforms he recommended to be brought forward. He said “lessons from history” teach that a “full demographic turnaround, with at least 110,000 births a year”, “a lifestyle turnaround, exemplifying a healthy and active lifestyle”, and a “complete turnaround of the healthcare system” will be necessary by 2030.

