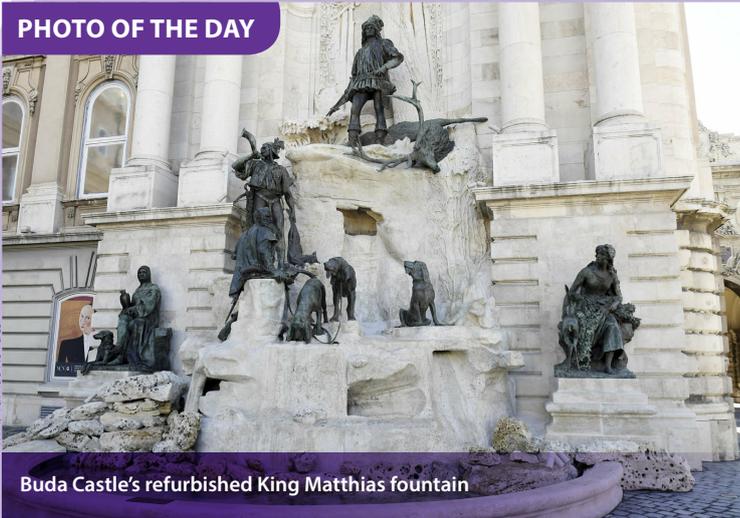


## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Tamás Kovács

Buda Castle's refurbished King Matthias fountain

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Stats office releases prelim retail figures for July**

**Coronavirus updates**

**Foreign minister announces South Korean electrolyte maker Dongwha Electrolyte's investment**

## TOP STORY

# SZIJJÁRTÓ: GOVT INTENT ON AVOIDING LOCKDOWN

The Hungarian government's measures banning foreigners from entering the country are an effective way of avoiding an economic lockdown during the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said.

Speaking at an event in Nagykálló, in north-eastern Hungary, where he presented documents on the government's investment support to Tecnica Ungheria, a local firm manufacturing sports gear, Szijjártó said caution was imperative in the fight to contain the virus. The government's priority now, Szijjártó said, is to avoid the virus from being imported into the country from abroad. Szijjártó said that seeing how robust the Hungarian economy and businesses are, he was hopeful the country would "win" the fight to defend the economy.

To protect domestic economy and jobs, the government has launched a support scheme for companies investing to protect jobs, Szijjártó noted. So far, 806 companies have committed to investing a total of 377 billion forints (EUR 104.1m) and 673 have received government support to the tune of 151 billion forints, he said. Tecnica Ungheria is investing 310 million forints and has received a 154 million government grant, Szijjártó said. The plant, which employs 350 people, will turn out one million ski boots a year after the technological upgrade, he said.

## **PUBLIC EMPLOYEE UNION CALLS STRIKE**

The trade union of Hungarian civil servants and public employees (MKKSZ) is calling a three-day strike by local government civil servants from Wednesday. The union's head Erzsébet Boros told a press conference held in front of the Ministry of Interior that the minister had refused to engage in meaningful dialogue and had flatly refused to consider any of their demands. Among them, the union wants anomalies in the system of local council budget financing to be resolved and expenses linked to the coronavirus crisis at local government level to be reimbursed by the central government.

Boros said the government's recent decisions had made the operation of local governments "impossible", and put the jobs of thousands of employees on the line. The austerity measures would force local councils to fire people, she warned. Fully 5,358, or 17.5%, of all public servants have said they would join the strike, Boros said. The strikers also demand that their basic wage be raised to 60,000 forints (EUR 168), Boros said. Basic wages have been stagnant for 13 years, forcing local governments to supplement them from their own resources, she said. They also demand that the minimum wage for graduates should be introduced to the sector, she said.

## **THREE CORONAVIRUS PATIENTS DIE, REGISTERED INFECTIONS UP BY 365 IN HUNGARY**

Three Covid-19 patients, all elderly and suffering from underlying illnesses, have died, while the number of registered coronavirus infections in Hungary has risen by 365 to 6,622 over the past 24 hours, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Wednesday morning. The number of fatalities has increased to 619, and 3,903 people have made a recovery. There are 2,100 active infections and 98 Covid-19 patients are being treated in hospital, seven on ventilators. Fully 11,485 people are in official home quarantine and 437,531 tests have been carried out.

The site warned Hungarians to observe social distancing guidelines and hygiene regulations. The government has decided to close borders to foreigners from Sept 1, with certain exceptions, re-introducing border protection measures in force during the first wave of the epidemic. Under the decision Hungarians returning from abroad will have to self-quarantine for 14 days, or until they produce two negative tests taken two days apart. Most infections have been registered in Budapest (2,960), followed by Pest County (945) and the counties of Fejér (437), Komárom-Esztergom (346) and Zala (296). Békés County has the fewest infections (29).

## **DK DEMANDS RELEASE OF INFECTION DATA, FORECASTS, PLANNED MEASURES**

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) has called on the government to release details of new coronavirus infection cases and forecasts, as well as planned measures affecting the public. "The government must publish details on where exactly the new cases have been identified and if there are epicentres of the epidemic in Hungary," the party's spokesman, Balázs Barkóczi, said. "We also demand the government announce what further measures it plans and whether those include school closures and the emptying of hospitals," he said.

Barkóczi said that as a second wave got under way in Hungary, the public still knew nothing about what they might face in the coming weeks. He said the public health authority (NNK) projected an increase in the number of infections, based on tests of sewage, whereas chief epidemiologist János Szlávik, referring to the same tests, said "a serious wave cannot be expected". Barkóczi also complained that the government had banned entry by all foreign nationals one day while granting certain exemptions the next.

## **CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER WARNS OF VIRUS SPREADING AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE**

The novel coronavirus has been spreading mostly among young

people for the past few weeks, the chief medical officer told MTI, adding that the average age of new patients was around 30. "There is a higher possibility in that age group to pass on the virus in a social setting," Cecília Müller said, highlighting the responsibility of young people. She noted that while young people may have milder symptoms of Covid-19, they could transmit the virus to others just as well. Müller also warned that rules and recommendations concerning the epidemic should be observed, with special regard to social distancing, wearing masks in enclosed public spaces, the frequent disinfecting of hands as well as surfaces used by other people. Responsible behaviour could help prevent the reintroduction of restrictions in force during the first wave of the epidemic, she added.

### **UNIONS INITIATE TALKS WITH GOVT ON ECONOMY, JOB PROTECTION MEASURES**

Trade unions have issued a joint statement requesting talks with the government on its planned economy and job protection measures for the fourth quarter of 2020 and the next two years in view of the recent surge in novel coronavirus cases in Hungary. Union federations MSZSZ, Liga, MOSZ, ÉSZT, SZEK and the Seventh Confederation are seeking talks with the government on the issues surrounding the start of the

new school year and a separate comprehensive series of consultations concerning the government's medium-term economy protection measures and plans to boost growth. The federations said that in light of the effects of the first wave of the epidemic on the job market, the distribution of burdens in society could not be considered fair if the employment interests of workers are not given enough attention. They said the state had to be prepared to provide support for parents if they again find themselves having to take care of and homeschool their children in the event of another lockdown or a pivot back to digital classes.

### **HUNGARY PPI RISES 3.4% YR/YR IN JULY**

Industrial producer prices rose by 3.4% in July from the same month a year earlier, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. Prices for domestic sale edged down 0.2% while export prices rose by 5.3%. In a month-on-month comparison, industrial producer prices were up 0.7% as domestic prices increased by 0.8% and export prices by 0.6%.

### **MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: FARMERS NEED PROTECTION AMID PANDEMIC**

European citizens see the security of food supplies as ever more important amid the coronavirus pandemic, and whereas Hungarian farmers will find

themselves in a difficult situation, the food supply of the Hungarian people is guaranteed, Minister of Agriculture István Nagy said at the informal meeting of European Union agriculture ministers in Koblenz. The ministers discussed lessons learned from the coronavirus crisis regarding the agricultural sector, a statement by the Ministry of Agriculture said. At the meeting held by Germany, which holds the rotating EU presidency, Nagy said the issue of food security had become more pressing since the outbreak of the virus, and a key lesson drawn from the crisis was the need to bolster the sector's resilience. The income security of farmers is a top priority, he said, adding that EU area-based subsidies play a key role accordingly. Investment subsidies channelled through rural developments will be prioritised with a view to boosting competitiveness, he added.

### **LMP CALLS FOR VAT CUT FOR BASIC PRODUCE**

The opposition LMP called on the government to cut VAT on basic food produce to 5%. Antal Csárdi, the deputy leader of the party's parliamentary group, told a press conference the tax system was "immensely unfair", and insisted the state earned more on the sale of food produce than retailers did. Partly due to coronavirus, making a living has become more difficult in Hungary, Csárdi said, and "hundreds of thousands cannot afford to put

fresh fruit and veg on the table". He called it "unacceptable" that pensioners and large families should have difficulties buying basic produce. Currently, VAT on restaurant services is 5%, while fruit is in the 27% bracket, he said, adding that there was room in the budget to reduce VAT accordingly.

### **CITY PARK SPORTS CENTRE OPENS**

The new Budapest City Park sports centre built on a 3.5-hectare plot of land as part of the Liget Budapest programme is being handed over to the public tomorrow. The outdoor sports centre will be Budapest's most versatile, catering to a dozen sports in a spruced-up green environment, Városliget Zrt chief executive Benedek Gyorgyevics said. The centre contains an artificial grass football pitch with a grandstand, a basketball arena, three multifunctional sports fields, a gym, a climbing wall and ping-pong tables, among other facilities that include full access for the disabled. Most of the amenities are available to the public free of charge, he said.

### **BUDAPEST DISTRICT MAYOR DEMANDS HALT TO FURTHER BUILDING IN CITY PARK**

Csaba Horváth, the mayor of Budapest's Zugló district, demanded that the central government stop any further construction projects in City Park and dismantle metal barriers erected two years ago around the sites in question. Horváth, group leader of the opposition Socialists in the City Assembly, told a press conference that the government must respect the will of more than 80% of Budapest residents, as well as keeping its own promise not to go against decisions of the metropolitan council.

"We've acknowledged the presence of the already completed buildings and swallowed the fact," Horváth said, adding however that he saw no reason to maintain the barriers once landscaping work was finished, unless they served "someone's purpose to still consider the park a construction site". Horváth said that planned new buildings such as the National Gallery, the House of Innovation and the Városliget Theatre "cannot be ever

built" in the park. "The residents of Budapest deserve to have 200-year-old City Park, the capital's oldest, maintained as a public park and not sold as a building site," he said.

### **INTL VILMOS ZSIGMOND FILM FESTIVAL TO MARK TWO ANNIVERSARIES**

The 4th international Vilmos Zsigmond Film Festival, named after the Oscar-winning Hungarian cinematographer, will celebrate two anniversaries this year, the organisers said. The festival held between Sept. 8 and 12 in Szeged, Zsigmond's home town, will mark the eminent cinematographer's 90th birth anniversary and the 100th anniversary of the opening of the city's first cinema, they said. The festival will award, in three categories, the Vilmos Zsigmond Prize for best cinematography, to be decided by a jury of five on Sept. 12. According to the festival's home page, a record number of entries were made this year, including 67 feature-length films, 430 shorts and 41 experimental films. The highest number come from Spain, followed by Mexico, the United States, Belgium, Germany, Russia and Hungary.