

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zsolt Czeglédi

Demo runs of new Mercedes-Benz e-Citaro electric bus under way in Debrecen, eastern Hungary

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Stats office releases preliminary industrial output data for July**

**Foreign affairs and trade minister addresses announcement of Shell LNG trade deal**

**Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference presser on autumn session**

**Coronavirus updates**

## TOP STORY

### TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS 'KEY TO SECURITY'

Hungary's new travel restrictions are key to preserving the security of the Hungarian people and economy, the foreign minister has said.

Hungary's border closures that came into effect on Sept. 1 will be reassessed at the end of the month, Péter Szijjártó said. He cautioned against the imposition of a lockdown similar to strict measures taken in the spring, when Hungarian schools were closed and the economy ground to a halt, saying this would leave the country's economy and society in dire straits. Hungary, he added, was expected to emerge as one of the "winners" of the post-pandemic world order. To achieve that goal, Hungary aims to draw as many investments as possible, he said. Accordingly, workers living across the borders are being allowed to commute to work in Hungary, and foreign business trips within the same company group are exempt from the restrictions, he added.

Regarding football players, Szijjártó said Hungary was adhering to UEFA guidelines that requires one negative coronavirus test not older than three days from foreign players entering Hungary. Hungarian players returning from abroad will have to show two tests, he said.

## **SZIJJÁRTÓ IN VATICAN DISCUSSES AIDING PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS**

The Vatican knows it can count on Hungary when it comes to helping Christian communities in need, Foreign Minister Peter Szijjártó said after meeting Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, his Holy See counterpart, in Vatican City on Thursday. Speaking to MTI, Szijjártó said his talks with Gallagher focused on combatting “rising anti-Christian sentiment in the world”. “Hungary has a thousand years of Christian statehood behind it, so we cannot allow the attacks against Christianity which flare up every now and again to achieve victory over Christian values,” Szijjártó said. The minister said he and Gallagher were in agreement that Christianity today “is under attack from all sides”, which he said manifested in physical assaults and political, ideology-based attacks. “We’ve also been targeted from where we wouldn’t have expected to be, meaning western Europe, where Christian values are being questioned, and many want to do away with Europe’s Christian identity, roots and traditions,” he added.

Szijjártó said Christianity was the most persecuted religion in the world, with more than 250 million Christians facing violence and persecution every day for their faith. Some 10,000 churches and Christian

buildings have been attacked or vandalised in recent years, he added. Hungary’s government remains committed to supporting Christian communities in need, the minister said. In his talks, Szijjártó said he briefed Gallagher on the emergency aid Hungary provided to Lebanon’s Maronite Church after last month’s Beirut port blast, the support Hungary provides to persecuted Christian communities in the Middle East, and the government’s grant scheme for Christian students who experienced discrimination in their home countries.

Szijjártó described cooperation between Hungary and the Catholic Church as “excellent”, noting the government’s support for the renovation of Catholic churches. “Some 3,000 Christian churches have been built or renovated over a ten-year period in Hungary and parts of the Carpathian Basin populated by ethnic Hungarians, and the number of church-run schools has doubled,” he said.

Szijjártó said that if the situation regarding the novel coronavirus pandemic allowed, Hungary was prepared to host the International Eucharistic Congress next September after having had to cancel it this year because of the pandemic. “Hungary will be a good host of the meeting.”

Szijjártó also reacted to comments by Italian Interior Minister Luciana Lamorgese, who this week urged the mandatory redistribution of

migrants across the European Union and proposed that member states refusing to take part in such a scheme should be denied coronavirus relief funding. “We’re used to seeing liberal and left-wing parties constantly blackmail central Europeans, especially patriotic governments,” Szijjártó said. “They’re threatening to cut European funding to us if we don’t give up our strict migration policy, but we won’t.” The government will continue to resist and protect Hungary and Europe from illegal immigration, Szijjártó said. “We’re entitled to European funds; they aren’t handouts,” he said. “Hungary fulfils all its EU obligations and under the European Treaties; these funds are our money, too. We won’t give in to any form of blackmail.”

## **OUTGOING FILM, DRAMA UNIVERSITY LEADERS HOLD TALKS WITH SUPERVISORY BOARD MEMBERS**

Three of the outgoing leaders of Budapest’s University of Theatre and Film Arts (SZFE) have had talks with the head and other members of the institution’s supervisory board, promising to continue to carry out their duties until the end of the month. SZFE’s senate and leadership announced their resignation on Monday, saying the foundation that took over the university on Sept. 1 under a government decree had

deprived them of “all essential powers”. Attila Vidnyánszky, the director of the National Theatre, has been appointed to head the university’s supervisory board, sparking protests from many teachers and students. Addressing a press conference after their talks with Vidnyánszky and other board members, SZFE deputy rector László Upor, László Bagossy, the head of the Theatre Institute, and Gábor Németh, the rector’s advisor, said the positions of the outgoing leadership and the supervisory board were still far apart. Bagossy said many of the disagreements between the two sides at the talks stemmed from their differences as to how they regarded democracy. “Our approach to running SZFE is also part of our approach to democracy,” he said, adding that the two sides had also failed to make any progress on resolving their disagreements regarding the university’s recently re-written statutes.

Németh said Wednesday’s talks had made it clear to him that the supervisory board had a different understanding of change than they did. He said that while the supervisory board believed that SZFE had failed to evolve with the times over the past 30 years, the university’s leaders “tried to point out the many ways teaching at the university was modernised” during that time.

Commenting on the talks, Vidnyánszky told public television channel M5 that while SZFE’s outgoing leaders and the supervisory board of the Theatre and Film

Foundation had many disagreements, they were in agreement that classes at the university must get under way on Monday. Vidnyánszky also said he was ready to meet with students regarding the changes at the university.

In a statement, the foundation’s supervisory board welcomed the start of talks between the university’s operator and its leaders. The board said it had been made clear at Wednesday’s meeting that SZFE’s outgoing leaders would carry out their duties until the end of September and would ensure that classes are able to start and the institution is able to operate lawfully.

Vidnyánszky told public Kossuth Radio that SZFE needed a new leadership and new employees. Vidnyánszky said after the talks with the university’s leadership that their opinions “differ on all important issues”. He said the only “positive result” was they had agreed that work should resume at the university on Monday. The outgoing management is in charge until the end of September, and it is their responsibility to start teaching on time, he said.

Vidnyánszky, who identifies as a cultural nationalist, said “a sort of elitism has been prevalent at the university for generations regarding certain ways of thinking, methods and concepts”. The teachers working under the old management cannot imagine that “our way of thinking” also has a place in the curriculum, he said.

## **SOCIALISTS TO SUBMIT CORONA DEFENCE PACKAGE TO PARLT**

The opposition Socialist party will submit a proposal to parliament on handling the social and economic fallout of the coronavirus pandemic, the leader of the party said. Bertalan Tóth told an online press conference that the government had failed to avoid a social crisis, as 400,000 people were now out of work and 200,000 families had been left without unemployment benefits. The government’s “success propaganda” is belied by economic indicators such as declining GDP, rising prices, and upticks in the budget deficit and state debt, he said. The Socialists want the government to raise the sum and duration of unemployment benefits, and to expand the wage supplement scheme to cover up to 80% of employees’ wages. They would also double the family allowance, raise pensions by 6.5% and increase the support in utility fees for small private customers. The Socialists support other opposition Párbeszéd’s call for the state to make coronavirus tests free of charge as many families cannot afford to pay for them to avoid quarantine, Tóth said. The party has also launched a charity aimed to collect 10 million forints (EUR 28,000) to help families at the start of the school year, he said.

Tóth said the government was “generous with its own oligarchs”

but tight-fisted with Hungarians. "While friends and family [close to ruling Fidesz] were paid", Hungarian people are lacking appropriate care, he said.

Socialist deputy leader Imre Komjáthi told the same press conference the government had "left Hungarian jobholders by the wayside" by spending more on "propaganda, national consultation and billboard campaigns" than on saving jobs. He called on the government to start consultations with employers' bodies and trade unions.

### **HOUSE SPEAKER DECORATES AUSTRIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT**

Speaker of Parliament László Kövér presented Austrian National Council President Wolfgang Sobotka with the Order of Merit of Hungary, Medium Cross with Star on behalf of President János Áder in Vienna on Wednesday, public news broadcaster M1 said. Sobotka was presented the award for his efforts to boost relations between Austria and Hungary and for standing up against the "policy of open borders and uncontrolled immigration", M1 said. In his laudation at the ceremony, Kövér praised Sobotka for his contributions to the two countries' smooth handling of the migration crisis. Speaking to Hungarian public media, Kövér said Sobotka had also contributed to Hungary and Austria's

competent handling of "the problems of the recent period" concerning migration during his tenure as interior minister. Kövér said bilateral relations were the best they had been in a long time.

### **PM OFFICE HEAD, JUSTICE MINISTER LAUNCH CAREER SCHEME AT PUBLIC SERVICE UNIVERSITY**

Gergely Gulyás, the head of the Prime Minister Office, and Justice Minister Judit Varga on Thursday launched a career programme at Budapest's National Public Service University (NKE). Representing Hungarian interests is vitally important in the European Union which functions effectively only if those interests are clearly defined, Gulyás said. In order for Hungary to represent its interests effectively in the EU it must be familiar with the EU's operation and rules, he said, adding that effective representation of national interests require people who have a clear concept of their own national identity.

Varga said at the event that "Europe would be weak without strong nation states". A European community can only be successful in the long term if its member states "honestly and proudly" stand by their own interests, she said. It is therefore key that Hungary has professionals who believe in an EU based on the close cooperation of nation states and in the future of a sovereign Hungary, she said.

### **UNICEF REPORT: HUNGARY'S CHILD WELFARE RANKS 15TH ON EU, OECD LIST**

Hungary ranks 15th among European Union and OECD countries in terms of child welfare, according to a UNICEF report. The United Nations Children's Fund reviewed national and international surveys on the welfare of children in 41 EU and OECD member states to highlight the factors influencing children's welfare in affluent countries. The Worlds of Influence report looking into children's mental and physical health, academic and social skills and happiness found that children are the happiest in the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway, while Chile, Bulgaria and the United States are at the bottom of the list. Hungary ranked 13th regarding children's life skills, 15th in mental health and 21st in physical health.

The report surveyed children's subjective happiness. In the Netherlands, 90% of fifteen-year-olds said they were satisfied with their lives, while only 53% of Turkish children said the same. Hungary ranked 16th, with 77% of respondents saying they were satisfied. Regarding suicide rates, the report found that on average 10 out of every 100,000 children between the ages of 15 and 19 commit suicide in rich countries. Those rates were lowest in Greece (1.4), Portugal (2.1) and Israel (2.2), and

highest in Lithuania (18.2). Hungary (4.5) ranked 14th. The number of overweight and obese children has grown in rich countries in recent years, with every third child now falling into that category, the report said. Hungary is 23rd on the UNICEF's list of countries, with 28% of children overweight or obese.

Hungary ranked 27th regarding children's skills in reading and maths, with Estonia, Ireland and Finland leading the list, and Bulgaria, Romania and Chile lagging behind. Hungary took 26th place on the list ranking the countries on their economic, social and environmental factors, as well as child policies, the report said.

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### **ONE PATIENT DIES, REGISTERED INFECTIONS UP BY 301 IN HUNGARY**

An elderly Covid-19 patient has died and the number of registered coronavirus infections in Hungary has risen by 301 to 6,923, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Thursday morning. The number of fatalities has increased to 620, and 3,930 people have made a recovery. There are 2,373 active infections and 100 Covid-19 patients are being treated in hospital, seven on ventilators. Fully 12,608 people are in official home quarantine and 445,047 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 (3,076), followed by Pest County (987) and the counties of Fejér (452), Komárom-Esztergom (348) and Zala (296). Békés County has the fewest infections (29).

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### **DONGWHA ELECTROLYTE TO SET UP HUF 11 BN PLANT NEAR BUDAPEST**

Dongwha Electrolyte Hungary will set up an 11 billion forint (EUR 31m) electrolyte plant in Sósút, on the outskirts of Budapest, the minister of foreign affairs and trade announced. The investments will create 90 jobs initially, Péter Szijjártó told a press conference. He said big investments in battery plants locally by Samsung SDI, SK Innovation and other Korean companies had created a demand that the Dongwha group can fill. Competition was fierce for the investment since the Dongwha Group has plants in four continents, Szijjártó said, noting that the 13,000sqm plant is Dongwha's first in Europe. The volume of Hungary's trade with South Korea has increased by 16% to close to 2 billion dollars in the first six months of 2020 amid the pandemic with Hungary's exports going up by 26%, the foreign minister said.

Lee Si-Joon, the president of Dongwha Enterprise, said their investment is poised to serve as "an important jumping board" for Hungary to become one of Europe's leading battery producers.

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### **KSH: RETAIL SALES EDGE UP 0.4% IN JULY**

Retail sales in Hungary edged up by an annual 0.4% in July, continuing to recover after lockdown declines in April and May, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. Retail sales growth slowed from 0.8% in May. Adjusted food sales rose by 3.3%, non-food sales were up 0.4% and fuel sales fell by 7.0%. In the January-July period, retail sales rose by an adjusted and unadjusted 1.1%. Food sales were up 4.4%, non-food sales increased by 1.9% and vehicle fuel sales dropped by 10.6%.

ING Bank senior analyst Péter Virováczi said the moderate recovery in retail sales would continue for the rest of the summer, but added that growth could slow in the autumn as government wage support measures wind up, leaving some households with less income.

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### **BUDAPEST AIRPORT EXPECTS PASSENGER NUMBERS TO FALL TO 3,000 DAILY**

Budapest's Liszt Ferenc International Airport is expecting that passenger numbers will come to only around

3,000 daily due to the new coronavirus-related restrictions, the communications director of operator Budapest Airport said. So far, only discount airline Wizz Air has cancelled flights, keeping only 12 of their 73 destinations, Katalin Valentinyi told public news broadcaster M1. The airport expects further cancellations next week, she added. The airport has re-introduced temperature checks and checks the documents of all passengers wishing to enter Hungary, Valentinyi said. They also have to complete a "quarantine form", she added. Those not eligible to enter the country will have to wait in the transit zone, she said, adding that very few, barely 20 such passengers arrived since Tuesday when the restrictions took effect. They detected no passengers with coronavirus-like symptoms, she said. The ban on entry by foreigners, with some exceptions, was issued by the government in response to an increase in the number of coronavirus cases, many originating abroad.

### **EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE PROGRAMME 'AIMS TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY'**

The European Capital of Culture programme aims to showcase the region's values and to strengthen its communities, Tibor Navracsics, the government commissioner coordinating the programme, said in Veszprém, in central Hungary, which is to be a European Capital of Culture in 2023. The series of programmes organised until then include the 22nd International Contemporary Dance Festival, held between September 6 and 10, Navracsics said.

László Vándorfi, director of the city's Pannon Várszínház theatre, noted that foreign performances are being cancelled due to the coronavirus epidemic. Four Veszprém venues, the Petőfi Theatre, the Hangvilla, the Agóra centre and the Latinovits-Bujtor Theatre will provide venues for 14 plays, he said. György Krámer, the festival's artistic director, said performers include the Bozsik Yvette Company, the Central European Dance Theatre, the Pécs Ballet and the Duda Éva Company.

### **WINNING PHOTOGRAPHS OF PORTRAIT OF HUMANITY COMPETITION SHOWN AT CAPA CENTRE**

Works by the winners of the Portrait of Humanity 2020 photography competition, 30 images in all, will be shown at the Capa Centre in Budapest from Friday until Oct. 22. The show features Eric Demers's Portrait of activist Greta Thunberg speaking before the largest gathering in Canadian history, as well as Marie Hald's images celebrating self-acceptance, capturing Norwegian positive body image activist Marte. Mirja Maria Thiel's photograph captures an intimate moment between a couple married for sixty years, while Snezhana von Büdingen's series features Sofie, a nineteen-year-old girl with Down syndrome. 1854 Media, the publisher of the British Journal of Photography, announced the 2020 Portrait of Humanity competition with a view to providing photographers the opportunity to show "what it means to be human in this troubled age". A jury of leading photo editors, curators and festival organisers selected the images from thousands of entries.