

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zsolt Szibetvári

Rubik cube contest held in Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

FM addresses ground-breaking ceremony of Pannon Növényolajgyártó

Hungarian Academy of Arts MMA holds annual assembly

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

PROTEST HELD AGAINST CHANGES AT SZFE

Students of the University of Theatre and Film Arts (SZFE) and their sympathisers protested in central Budapest on Sunday afternoon against changes to the way the university is governed.

The protesters insist that the institution has been deprived of its autonomy. A human chain was formed starting from the university building in Vas Street and ending in front of Parliament. The protesters forming the chain held the same kind of red and white plastic tape that was wrapped around the SZFE building. They also passed a so-called charter written by the university's outgoing senate which sets out fundamental principles regarding how the senate envisages cooperating with the Ministry of Innovation and Technology (ITM), the ministry responsible for sections of Hungary's higher-education network. Another human chain was formed in Kossuth Square in front of Parliament. While waiting for the charter, the demonstrators chanted: "Free country, free university" and several sang a choral work, *Nobis pacem*.

At the university's Szentkirályi Street building, László Upor, the university's outgoing vice-rector, noted that he had agreed with students occupying the university to postpone Monday's opening by a week and extended the enrolment deadline to Sept. 13.

Hungary Matters is an English-language newsletter produced and distributed by the Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA) with content provided by Duna Media Service Provider exercises copyright over all content. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, redistributed or transmitted without prior written permission from the publisher, with the exception of copies made by individuals for private use, educational purposes or scholarly research, provided that such transmissions do not exceed the extent justified by the purpose and are not aimed at financial gain, even indirectly, and the source name are indicated at all times.

All rights reserved. Enquiries should be made to the English Help Desk at +361 441 9340
For MTI's real time coverage please visit <http://english.mti.hu>, <http://econews.hu>



RECTORS' CONFERENCE, NATL STUDENT UNION INITIATE TALKS ON SZFE

The Hungarian Rectors' Conference and the National Union of Students in Hungary (HÖÖK) have called for talks to resolve the standoff between the outgoing university leadership and the new supervisory board over Budapest's University of Theatre and Film Arts (SZFE). SZFE's senate and leadership announced their resignation this week, saying the foundation that took over the university on Sept. 1 under a government decree had deprived them of "all essential powers". The Hungarian Rectors' Conference said on Friday that SZFE's leadership, the head of its supervisory board and the university student union have all accepted an invitation to attend the meeting scheduled for next Tuesday at Eötvös Loránd University.

The Rectors' Conference said it had set up the meeting because it believed certain "strong statements" made by both the university's leadership and the supervisory board were only deepening the rift between the two sides, adding that their disagreements could only be settled through dialogue. On Wednesday, the university's outgoing leaders held talks with the head and other members of the institution's supervisory board, where they made a commitment to carry out their duties until the end of the month.

SZIJJÁRTÓ OPENS SECOND HUNGARY-ROMANIA MOTORWAY CROSSING

The foreign ministers of Hungary and Romania inaugurated the second motorway border crossing between the two countries. Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said that the new link was a "shared success", a basis for building "trust and mutual respect" between the two sides of the border. "On this basis even thorny [bilateral] issues could be resolved and concluded," he added. The new section between Nagykeréki and Borş, in Romania, links Hungary's M4 and Romania's A3 motorways. The new border crossing is the twelfth between the two countries, Szijjártó noted. Quality infrastructure is key in fostering neighbourly relations, he said. The third motorway crossing between Romania and Hungary is planned to open in 2024, between Csenger and Satu Mare (Szatmárnémeti), he said.

Szijjártó noted that Romania is Hungary's ninth largest trading partner and its fourth largest export market. Infrastructure developments will also benefit Hungarians living in Romania, he said. A high-capacity natural gas interconnector is planned to start operation next year, and high-voltage electric cables will also be connected in the near future, he said.

Szijjártó emphasised the importance of cooperation between Hungary's Hajdú-Bihar and Romania's Bihor (Bihar) counties and of ethnic Hungarians

voting in Romania's local elections. Speaking to the media after talks with the leaders of the ethnic Hungarian RMDSZ party's Bihor County chapter in Oradea (Nagyvárad), Szijjártó said the newly inaugurated motorway links between Budapest and Oradea as well as Debrecen and Oradea would open the door to new development opportunities. "One important goal is to create electrified rail links between Debrecen and Oradea as soon as possible," the minister said. "The feasibility study for this project has already been completed in Debrecen. We're prepared to support it with government funding and will propose to the Romanian government that we also make use of the funds offered by the European Union."

Concerning the novel coronavirus pandemic, Szijjártó said the reason why Hungary has closed its borders to foreigners was so that it could avoid having to impose internal restrictions again to contain the virus. Out of Hungary's seven neighbouring countries Romania is the only one with which Hungary has kept all its operational border crossings open, he said. "It was at the request of RMDSZ that we decided to keep every one of these border crossings open," Szijjártó said.

As regards an agreement signed between the Hungarian government and RMDSZ's Oradea chapter, Szijjártó said the next round of Hungary's economic development scheme aimed at helping ethnic Hungarian communities in Transylvania will

focus on north-western Romania. The government has so far disbursed some 70 billion forints (EUR 195.1m) among 6,000 applicants, generating 130 billion forints' worth of investments, he said. Szijjaártó said he had agreed with Senator Attila Cseke, head of the Bihar County chapter of RMDSZ, that Hungary will provide financial support to local Hungarians and the Reformed Church in Oradea to help them purchase school buildings and build dormitories for Hungarian students.

The minister also asked ethnic Hungarians living in Oradea and Bihar County to take part in Romania's local elections, saying the election would also impact their lives and future. "It would be nice if the proportion of the local Hungarian population and their share in political representation were brought into balance," Szijjaártó said. "It's important for us Hungarians to be united. It's important that we support the biggest Hungarian political organisation with the best chance of winning in the election, since it's our only chance for stronger representation here in Oradea, Bihar County and all of Romania." Szijjaártó also received an award from RMDSZ for his efforts in helping ethnic Hungarians in Romania.

FINMIN: EU RECOVERY PACKAGE SHOULD RESPECT TAX SOVEREIGNTY

The European Union's recovery package to offset the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic will have

to be set up in a way that respects member states' right to determine tax regulations, Hungarian Finance Minister Mihály Varga said in Warsaw where he attended a meeting of Visegrad Group finance ministers. The ministers also signed an agreement on regional cooperation regarding digital economy and the fight against tax evasion and money laundering. V4 cooperation has become an important factor in European politics, Varga said, all the more so since the region has become the "economic engine of Europe". Cooperation on tax procedures is a tool to strengthen the fight against tax fraud, Varga said. The EU's tax regulations should also be strengthened, enabling digital companies to be taxed, he added.

SOCIALISTS CALL FOR ACTION TO PROTECT LAKE BALATON AGAINST 'FIDESZ COLONISERS'

The opposition Socialists are pressing ahead with their initiative to protect Hungary's natural lakes, including Lake Balaton, the leader of the party has said. The party collected over 100,000 signatures in support of its initiative for a referendum on the matter which aimed to put a halt to Lake Balaton's "colonisation by [ruling] Fidesz", Bertalan Tóth said in a video posted on his Facebook page. Whereas the National Election Committee (NVB) rejected the referendum, this, he added, would not stop the Socialists from continuing its campaign. In the

video, Zoltán Gőgös, a former party lawmaker, said the Socialists will resubmit to parliament a 2018 bill on banning the sale of camping sites and public beaches, updated with provisions on natural lakes, and he invited other opposition parties to join the Socialists' campaign.

HOUSE SPEAKER MARKS 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF ORGANISATION OF FORMER HUNGARIAN PRISONERS IN SOVIET UNION

The organisation of former Hungarian prisoners and forced labourers in the Soviet Union (Szorakész) keeps national remembrance alive and sets an example of faith, patriotism and human decency, Speaker of Parliament László Kövér told a meeting marking the 30th anniversary of the organisation's establishment in Siofok, in western Hungary. In his address, Kövér said Gusztáv Menczer, the founder of Szorakész, had shown that the "secret" to surviving the Gulag was faith. "This -- faith in God and faith that he gave us a homeland and family so we could preserve it -- is also the secret to shaping a humanly liveable future in the 21st century," he said. The speaker said it was important to base all forms of individual and community "self-protection" on this faith in the future, too. "Self-protection is needed again today because although we had hoped for thirty years that the era of communism -- one of the most

Hungary Matters is an English-language newsletter produced and distributed by the Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA) with content provided by Duna Media Service Provider exercises copyright over all content. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, redistributed or transmitted without prior written permission from the publisher, with the exception of copies made by individuals for private use, educational purposes or scholarly research, provided that such transmissions do not exceed the extent justified by the purpose and are not aimed at financial gain, even indirectly, and the source name are indicated at all times.



violent eras of history -- would be over for good, authoritarian aspirations manifesting in intellectual and physical violence have emerged once again," Kövér said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ TURNS TO BELARUS COUNTERPART ON BEHALF OF ARCHBISHOP OF MINSK

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó has written to his Belarussian counterpart on behalf of the Catholic Archbishop of Minsk, Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, who was stopped from entering the country from Poland on August 31. In a statement commenting on the letter he wrote in English to Vladimir Makei, posted on Facebook on Sunday, Szijjártó said: "Given our friendship, I feel at ease writing to my counterpart ... in view of protecting Christian values that the world needs now more than ever."

The minister said he had known the metropolitan archbishop of Minsk-Mogilev for a long time. "I'm glad to note that we have a good relationship and we had a lively conversation when he received me at The Church of Saints Simon and Helena," he said in his Facebook comments. In the letter, Szijjártó said Hungary wanted to maintain good relations with Belarus politically and economically, as well as in cultural and religious life. The minister said he strongly believed that Kondrusiewicz sought "a peaceful solution" without harbouring any political ulterior motives.

CORONAVIRUS - REGISTERED INFECTIONS UP BY 495 IN HUNGARY

The number of registered coronavirus infections in Hungary has risen by 495 to 8,387 over the past 24 hours, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Sunday morning. The number of fatalities remained unchanged at 624, and 3,958 people have made a recovery. There are 3,805 active infections and 151 Covid-19 patients are being treated in hospital, 11 on ventilators. Altogether 18,480 people are in official home quarantine and 470,000 tests have been carried out.

Most infections have been registered in Budapest (3,669), followed by Pest County (1,202) and the counties of Fejér (534), Komárom-Esztergom (372), Zala (322) and Hajdú-Bihar (287). Békés County has the fewest infections (36).

MINISTRY: DATA FROM 320,000 PUBLIC QUESTIONNAIRES USED TO HELP CONTAIN VIRUS

So far over 320,000 people have filled out an online questionnaire aimed at helping Hungarian scientists analyse the effects of the coronavirus epidemic in Hungary and predict the possible spread of the virus, the Innovation and Technology Ministry (ITM) said. The purpose of the questionnaire is to collect up-to-date data to draw up more accurate epidemic models, the ministry said, adding that it will be

used by a team of their epidemiology mathematicians to predict the future spread of the epidemic and assessed the effects of related restrictions.

As part of the project dubbed Mask, forms can be filled out by any Hungarian individual, preferably daily, to assist protection efforts. A team of Hungarian scientists led by the University of Szeged is analysing the domestic effects of the epidemic on the basis of national data. According to the data, the average number of contacts made per capita went up by more than 60% in the first week of September compared with the end of August. This has given importance to contact tracing, the ministry said.

TEN SCHOOLS, NURSERIES SUSPEND CLASSROOM TEACHING

Out of Hungary's 6,000 educational institutions, four nurseries and six schools have suspended classroom teaching due to coronavirus, a government official has said. Zoltán Maruzsa, state secretary of public education, told current affairs channel M1 late on Friday that there is no need to make a blanket transfer to online learning for the time being. Schools and nurseries will be continually monitored and targeted action taken, he added.

The government sees digital education as a last resort since traditional classroom teaching is

“more effective in every way”, he said. According to current protocols, classroom teaching is suspended for 2-3 days, during which it is gauged whether the quarantine of the infected student has managed to stop the virus’s spread. Currently, 60-70 institutions are being actively monitored due to the suspected presence of the virus on school premises. In most cases, no further action will need to be taken, he said.

CORONAVIRUS - PÁRBSZÉD PUTS QUESTIONS TO KÁSLER

The opposition Párbeszéd party has turned to Miklós Kásler, the Minister of Human Resources, with a range of questions concerning policy on how to combat the coronavirus epidemic. Párbeszéd said it wants to know when the national public health authority is going to update its coronavirus procedures which have not changed since June. It also seeks answers as to whether outpatient care will again be suspended, and why testing for the virus has not been made free of charge when it is the case that people are expected to go into quarantine even though they have not entered the country from abroad. Also, Párbeszéd said it wants to know whether GPs over the age of 65 were still expected to carry on frontline work, whether large-scale research will be conducted nationwide, and why the hospital in Kiskunhalas specially built to cater for virus patients is still not being used

when rural hospitals are overwhelmed. The party also wants information on the protocol should the virus appear in a school, and whether the whole school would be closed or whether an affected class would switch to online learning. Further, it is unclear who would make such a decision, it added.

DÖMÖTÖR: NATIONWIDE SURVEY ON CORONAVIRUS COMPLETED

A total of 1,793,000 people have returned the government’s National Consultation questionnaire related to coronavirus measures, Csaba Dömötör, a state secretary of the Prime Minister’s Office, said. The survey is the second most successful the Hungarian government has conducted to tap public opinion, Dömötör said in a video message on Facebook. “We must prepare for a protracted fight against the virus, and it is good to know which points are the most important that Hungarians agree on.”

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán announced the launch of the survey in May to gauge the public’s opinion on a range of issues connected with the novel coronavirus epidemic and measures to restart the economy.

CORONAVIRUS - GOVT EYES SAFETY OF PEOPLE LIVING IN BORDER LOCALITIES

The government takes the opinions of people living in

border localities seriously and places particular importance on their safety, government officials said after meeting mayors in the border region of western Hungary on Saturday. The government has three primary objectives, Károly Konrád, parliamentary state secretary of the Interior Ministry, told a press conference. Noting the recent rise in the number of infections, he said it aims to safeguard the elderly and schools while ensuring the continuous functioning of the economy. Restricting entry to the country is a key line of defence when it comes to protecting the health of Hungarians, he added. At the same time, he said it was important for the government to understand the views of people living in localities near the border.

István Nagy, the Minister of Agriculture, noted that thanks to a recent government decision, people living within a 30-km radius of the border can now cross the Hungarian-Austrian border unimpeded every day in order to get to work or use services, he noted. Nagy also noted that on Friday the government decided to allow travel to Hungary for economic purposes as long as people were in possession of a negative PCR test, and tests carried out abroad would be acceptable. From Saturday, the customs Austria-Hungary border will be open 24 hours a day, he said.

PALKOVICS: GOVT EXPANDS ELECTRIC CAR SUBSIDY SCHEME

Given the success of the 5 billion forint (EUR 14m) subsidy scheme for electric vehicle purchases, the government has decided to expand the programme, with an extra 882 million forints now available for bids that meet the various criteria, László Palkovics, the minister of innovation and technology, told MTI on Saturday. As well as private individuals, businesses have also shown a strong interest in purchasing environmentally friendly vehicles, the minister said. With the new phase of subsidies, more than 230 electric vehicles can be purchased, which will bring the total number subsidised electric vehicles bought since the scheme was launched to more than 2,000, he said.

MEDIA AUTHORITY LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN HELP PEOPLE IDENTIFY FAKE NEWS

Hungary's media authority (NMHH) has launched a campaign to help people identify fake news, with an emphasis on helping the elderly, the authority's communications director told current affairs channel M1 on Sunday. Éva

Tafferner said the campaign warns of the dangers of news-sharing as well as the risks of superficial reading. The authority's 2019 survey on media habits found that more than half of media consumers had encountered fake news and that in many cases they found it hard to distinguish fake from real news.

NEW SYNAGOGUE INAUGURATED IN BUDAPEST

A new synagogue was inaugurated on Sunday in the Orthodox Jewish Elderly Care Home in Budapest's 12th district. The synagogue in Alma Street has been built with state support of 450 million forints (EUR 1.25m). Addressing the opening, Miklós Soltész, the state secretary for church and ethnic relations, said Hungary's Jewish community had strengthened, enriched and protected the nation. Referring to the tragedies of WW2, he said: "In January 1945, Russian soldiers were only minutes away from reaching the elderly home near Janos Hospital, so were unable to stop members of the Nazi Hungarian Arrow Cross from murdering its residents and nurses," Soltész said. "We are here today to heal that tragedy with the inauguration of the synagogue."

HUNGARY'S GOVT TO UNVEIL STATUE OF GEORGE BUSH SR IN CAPITAL

The Hungarian government is to unveil a statue of George Herbert Walker Bush, the 41st President of the United States, to Budapest to mark the 30th anniversary of the fall of communist rule in central and eastern Europe. According to a joint statement by the head of the Prime Minister's Office, Gergely Gulyás, and the US Ambassador to Hungary David B. Cornstein on Sunday, the statue will be unveiled in Szabadság Square, nearby the US embassy, on October 23. It said appreciation and gratitude "to the statesman who helped shape the future of Europe and Hungary" would thereby be expressed by both countries, adding that Bush had stood up for democracy and opposed the communist dictatorship. The statue of Bush Sr, the first US president to visit Budapest while in office, will stand next to an existing statue of President Ronald Reagan, symbolising, in Reagan's words, the common struggle of these two leaders to eliminate "the evil empire". President Bush contributed indelibly to the renewal of relations between the two countries, the statement said.