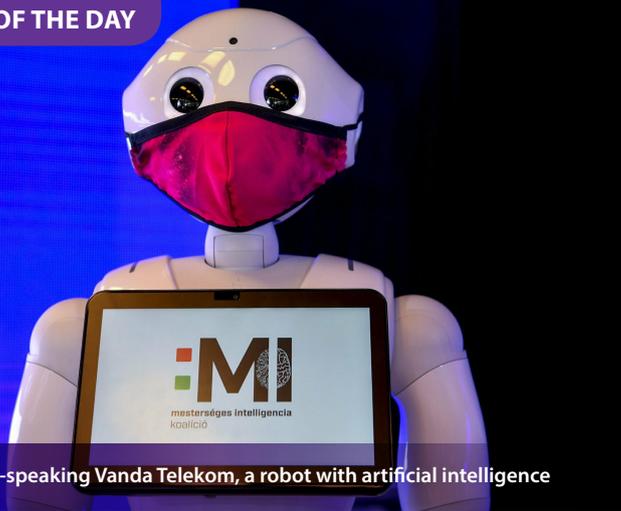


PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zsolt Czeglédi

Hungarian-speaking Vanda Telekom, a robot with artificial intelligence

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office releases Aug inflation data

Finance ministry releases budget report for Jan-Aug

Parl's foreign affairs committee meets

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

PALKOVICS PRESENTS AI STRATEGY

Hungary intends to harness the possibilities inherent in technological change and maximise the opportunities offered by artificial intelligence (AI), the minister of innovation and technology said, presenting Hungary's AI strategy at the University of Debrecen.

The strategy prepared with the involvement of over 250 member organisations of Hungary's AI Coalition and over a thousand experts identifies focus areas and highlighted projects, László Palkovics said. Hungarian society and the economy need to be prepared on the basis of the strategy because "this technology is already here and we should try to use it", he added. He highlighted Hungary's participation in the development of self-driving vehicles, saying that the country has already achieved much in this area, including the construction of a test track, launching educational-research programmes and setting up a research hub. Among the areas that "simplify our everyday life", he cited administrative tasks taken over by robot-like AI technology in post offices, government offices and bank customer services. AI is already also being used, for instance, to control irrigation in agriculture, he added. Palkovics said AI is expected to add 11-14% to Hungary's GNP by 2030. The organisational structure will include setting up a National Data Assets Agency (Navü) in Budapest, he added.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY-UEA COOPERATION GETTING STRONGER

Despite having encountered a variety of obstacles, Hungary and the United Arab Emirates have strengthened their cooperation recently, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said.

Szjijártó paid a visit to Abu Dhabi where he held talks with the foreign minister, the minister of industry and advanced technology, the minister of energy and infrastructure, the minister of state for food and water security and the minister of state for foreign trade.

Speaking to MTI about his talks, Szjijártó said trade turnover between the two countries increased by 14% in the first six months of the year, reaching 160 million dollars after growing by 37% in 2019. Hungary and the UAE have signed several agreements that will further boost bilateral cooperation and give more Hungarian businesses the chance to enter the country's market, Szjijártó said.

The most important agreement will see Hungarian lighting company Tungsram establish a subsidiary in Abu Dhabi and build a 4 million dollar plant with support from the Hungarian government, the minister said. Tungsram has already been contracted by several cities in the UAE to modernise the public lighting system, he said, adding that the company's new plant could help

increase its presence on the local market.

Hungary and the UAE have also agreed to set up a joint business council with participation from companies doing business in the two countries, Szjijártó said. Hungary's Eximbank has opened a 725 million dollar credit line to help fund joint projects between Hungarian and UAE-based firms, he added.

Another agreement will see the resumption of cargo flights between Hungary and the UAE, with flight crews allowed entry into each other's countries, he said.

The two countries have also agreed to take into consideration the European Union's recommendation when signing an investment protection agreement that will ensure a secure legal environment for the companies concerned, Szjijártó said.

He also said that Hungarian oil and gas company MOL was looking to break into the UAE's energy market with unique technology. Demand for the technology would be guaranteed, Szjijártó said, noting that the UAE was looking to increase the efficiency of the extraction of oil fields. Also, the UAE has recently discovered the world's fourth largest gas field which it expects to start extracting soon, he added.

On another subject, Szjijártó noted that the UAE last month started up the Arab world's first nuclear power plant, saying that Hungary's more than 30 years of experience with nuclear power and safety would provide a sound basis

for advancing energy cooperation between the two countries.

Szjijártó also highlighted the role of the UAE in the Middle East peace process, noting that the country recently agreed to normalise its diplomatic ties with Israel. This is "very good news" for Hungary, he said, arguing that the more peaceful and stable the region was, the less likely Europe was to come under pressure from migrants fleeing the area.

ONE DIES, REGISTERED CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS UP 341 IN HUNGARY

One Covid-19 patient with an underlying illness has died, and the number of registered coronavirus infections in Hungary has risen by 341 to 9,304 over the past 24 hours, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Tuesday morning. The number of fatalities stands at 626, and 3,972 people have made a recovery. There are 4,706 active infections and 192 Covid-19 patients are being treated in hospital, 12 on ventilators. Altogether 23,318 people are in official home quarantine and 487,146 tests have been carried out.

The site warned Hungarians to observe social distancing guidelines and hygiene regulations. The government closed borders to foreigners from Sept 1, with certain exceptions, re-introducing border protection measures in force during the first wave of the epidemic. Most infections have been registered in

Budapest (4,069), followed by Pest County (1,314) and the counties of Fejér (554), Komárom-Esztergom (383), Zala (343) and Hajdú-Bihar (340). Békés County has the fewest infections (41).

NATIONWIDE BAN ON VISITORS TO SOCIAL CARE HOMES

Hungary's chief medical officer ordered a nationwide ban on visits to social care homes as well as an order to keep residents from leaving the facilities, with a view to containing the spread of the novel coronavirus, the human resources ministry said. The only exception to the ban on visits applies to terminally sick residents in the final stage of their illness, the statement said. Exceptions to the rule on keeping residents of social care homes within the facility apply to people who must leave for treatment, as well as psychiatric patients and people with disabilities who may go on outings in groups. Also, overnight shelters for homeless people are not required to stop guests from leaving the facility, the ministry said. Incoming residents of social care homes may only be admitted in possession of two negative coronavirus tests.

GUEST NIGHTS DOWN 42.3% IN JULY

The number of guest nights at commercial accommodations in Hungary fell by 42.3% year on year to 2,586,000 in July as the pandemic

continued to impact the tourism industry, data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) show. The number of guest nights spent by domestic travellers dropped by 18.1% to 2,108,000, while the number spent by foreign visitors plunged by 74.9% to 478,000.

TRADE VOLUME CONTRACTS AT SLIGHTLY FASTER RATE IN JULY

Declines in Hungary's exports and imports accelerated slightly in July from the previous month, but remained in the single digits as the pandemic continued to impact trade, data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) show. Exports fell by an annual 5.6% to 8.509 billion euros and imports were down 7.7% at 8.247 billion. The declines in exports and imports compared with drops of 3.2% and 5.1%, respectively, in June. Hungary's trade surplus came to 262 million euros in July, widening from 78 million in the same month a year earlier.

TRIAL OF VIKING SIGYN CAPTAIN CONTINUES AFTER SUSPENSION DUE TO CORONAVIRUS

The trial of the Ukrainian boat captain, charged in connection with the deadly boat collision on the River Danube last May that resulted in the deaths of 27 people, continued with the presentation of evidence and

his sworn testimony. On May 29, the Viking Sigyn cruise ship collided with the Hableány sightseeing boat which had 33 South Korean tourists on board and a crew of two Hungarians. Seven tourists were rescued from the water after the collision. One of the bodies has not been recovered. The cruise ship's captain has been charged with fatal negligence and failing to provide assistance to persons in danger. Those acts are punishable under Hungarian law by prison sentences of 2-11 years. At court, the defendant refused to give provide new testimony or to answer questions. In his testimony at an earlier stage of the investigation, the captain said he did not notice the Hableány had turned to overtake the Viking Sigyn. He also said he had not received any relevant communication over the radio. The trial that had been under way in the spring was postponed due to the coronavirus epidemic.

CORONAVIRUS - SOCIALISTS CALL ON GOVT TO CANCEL UEFA SUPER CUP FINAL

The opposition Socialists have called on the government to cancel the UEFA Super Cup final set to be held in Budapest on Sept. 24, saying the event would only aggravate the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Lawmaker Ildikó Borbély Bangó told an online press conference that while the prime minister and the head of the Prime Minister's Office

had emphasised multiple times the need to prevent the import of the virus from abroad, "it appears that this does not apply to the soccer players and fans coming from abroad".

The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has made its way to Hungary in recent weeks, Borbély Bangó said, adding that her party prioritised the protection and the health of the Hungarian people. "We demand that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his government immediately call off the Super Cup final," she said. "If they truly put the health and protection of the Hungarian people first then it's no question that Hungary can't host this match."

The UEFA Super Cup final will see Europa League winner Sevilla face Champions League winner Bayern Munich.

Borbély Bangó also said the Socialists will submit to parliament a package of proposals for preventive measures concerning the pandemic. The proposals include making coronavirus tests free of charge and an 80% salary coverage for those who have lost their jobs or stand to lose them. The party will also propose extending the period of eligibility for unemployment benefits from three months to nine, doubling family benefits, the introduction of a 13th-month family benefit, restoring the Swiss indexation method for the calculation of pensions and raising the lowest pensions, she said.

DK: HUNGARY GOVT BUYS VENTILATORS TWICE AS EXPENSIVE AS SLOVAKIA

The Slovak government has made its ventilator purchases at some 50% of the price at which its Hungarian counterpart did, the deputy leader of opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) told a press conference. László Varju said that the ventilators to Slovakia cost an average 27,000 euros each, while the Hungarian foreign ministry paid 54,000 euros.

Varju went on to say that Hungary had also bought Slovak-made ventilators "a lot more expensive than 27,000 euros" from a company "which could not sell a single ventilator to its own government". According to Varju, the figures are "further evidence for government corruption".

In reaction, ruling Fidesz said that while the leftist opposition had been "obstructing" preventive efforts, "thousands of health, foreign affairs and law-enforcement officials were working to provide all equipment to save lives".

JOBBIK PROPOSES CHEMICAL CASTRATION FOR PERPETRATORS OF SEX CRIMES

The opposition Jobbik party called for harsher punishments for paedophiles and people who commit sex crimes, including the introduction of chemical castration. Party deputy leader Balázs

Ander told a press conference that recent "appalling court rulings" had revealed severe shortcomings in this area of criminal law, prompting the party to submit a draft resolution to parliament. He added that Jobbik, being "a party of law and order", would always take the side of victims and the vulnerable. Jobbik's spokeswoman on women and family support policy, Zsuzsanna Beleznay, told the same press conference that an increase had been seen in recidivist offenders when it came to paedophiles and sex crimes. Chemical castration is a pharmaceutical treatment that could significantly reduce the high recidivist rate, she added. Jobbik proposes chemical castration as optional for first-time sexual offenders but mandatory for recidivists, she said.

TUNGSRAM CEO: HUNGARY COULD BE WINNER OF PANDEMIC

Europe and Hungary could come out as winners of the novel coronavirus pandemic as manufacturers are forced to rethink if it's worth keeping their supply chains in China, the president and CEO of Tungsram told daily Magyar Nemzet. A recent Bank of America report showed that many companies are switching to a local approach, with 80% of global manufacturers facing drop-outs in the supply chain and over 75% of companies being forced to speed up plans to move home, the paper said. Jörg Bauer told the paper that Europe and Hungary were in a

favourable position. The Hungarian government has created an economic environment in recent years which is attractive to companies that prioritise innovation, he added. Tungsram, which is based in Hungary but has business ties in around a hundred countries around the world, has also recognised the benefits of a trend involving manufacturers moving back from China, combined with central Europe's favourable location, he said.

BUDAPEST AIRPORT EXPECTS STEEPER DROP IN PASSENGERS

Liszt Ferenc International operator Budapest Airport expects passenger numbers to fall to 5.5 million this year, down from an earlier estimate of 10 million, due to expected flight cancellations and reduced demand resulting from the novel coronavirus pandemic. Budapest Airport said in a statement that after serving a record 16.2 million passengers in 2019, it had originally expected more than 17 million people to pass through the airport this year.

However, by the end of August Liszt Ferenc International had only handled 3.5 million passengers compared with 10.6 million by the end of the

same month last year. After April's low point in passenger airline traffic, the number of passengers using the airport started rising again, reaching 393,665 in August, the statement said, noting however that this figure was down significantly from last August's 1.6 million passengers.

Budapest Airport said it expects the latest round of entry restrictions introduced by the government to have a similar effect on passenger numbers as the restrictions that were in place from March to June had. Low-cost airlines Wizz Air and Ryanair have already cancelled flights for the period ahead with the rest of the carriers expected to decide on their schedules and cancellations in the coming days, the operator said. Budapest Airport noted that it expects daily passenger numbers to come to 3,000 at most in the coming period.

TWO BORDER CROSSINGS REOPENED BETWEEN HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA

The Hungarian-Slovak border crossings near Bánréve and Tornanádaska were reopened after closing due to coronavirus-related measures. In a decision that came into force on September 1, the Hungarian

government closed its borders to foreigners to curb the spread of the virus. One week later, the two crossings were reopened to accommodate people commuting to work across the border. At a press conference in Bánréve, State Secretary Károly Konrád said the government considered the special situation of localities near the border. The borders were opened under strict imposition of epidemic regulations, he added. Tamás Menczer, a state secretary of the foreign ministry, said the government was working to find a solution to those challenges, and opening the borders was part of that effort.

HUNGARIAN PRESS PHOTO EXHIBITION TO OPEN ON WEDNESDAY

The 38th Hungarian Press Photo Exhibition displaying some 350 photographs will open on Wednesday at Budapest's Robert Capa Contemporary Photography Centre. The images were selected by an international jury from among 6,079 photos submitted by 267 photographers, the organisers told MTI. The exhibition is open to visitors free of charge on Wednesday, and will run until Nov. 15.

