

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTVA/Lajos Szócs

Szamos Marzipán's pear caramel mousse wins Dessert of Budapest 2020 competition

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Coronavirus updates**

**Budapest transport authority unveils new electric bus**

**European Parliament holds plenary session**

## TOP STORY

# KEEPING ECONOMY RUNNING 'TOP PRIORITY'

The top priority of economic policy during the second wave of the coronavirus epidemic is to make sure the Hungarian economy stays afloat and that jobs and enterprises are protected and supported, the finance minister said.

Addressing the annual general meeting of the Joint Venture Association (JVSZ), Mihály Varga said the government will unveil new measures to protect the economy in the next few weeks. The minister said the economy was now more resilient to knocks and more stable than in 2008, and the policymaking of recent years combined with timely protection measures had gone a long way towards insulating the Hungarian economy from the kind of bigger shocks seen elsewhere in the European Union. Hungary, he said, must return to growth as soon as possible, adding that this aim may be achieved next year. The country's operative board for protecting the economy was established with the main aim of removing obstacles to growth, and the board will continue the work it began in the summer, he said. Varga said that whereas the public debt would rise this year, it would start easing again next year. Domestic investors are playing a greater role in financing the public debt, he said. The government aims to ensure that Hungarian businesses emerge stronger from the crisis, the minister added.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: INTL POLITICAL ORGS SHOULD BACK US MIDDLE EAST PEACE PLAN**

The Hungarian government expects international political organisations, including the European Union, to support the United States' plan to secure peace in the Middle East, the foreign minister said in Washington. Hungary continues to support the US in its efforts to bring about peace in the Middle East, Péter Szijjártó said ahead of talks with US national security advisor Robert O'Brien and White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, adding that the region's stability was strongly linked to Europe's security. If there is peace and stability in the Middle East then there is a good chance that Europe can avoid having to deal with new migration waves from the region, the minister said.

Szjijártó is the only EU foreign minister attending the signing of Israel's agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain on normalising diplomatic ties, a document he called "historic". "It's clear that US President Donald Trump himself and his administration have played a huge role in this," Szijjártó said, praising the president for his efforts in brokering the deals. "Hungary continues to support the US's peace efforts in the Middle East," he said. "We stand by Israel and we stand by the position that Israel should not be held to double standards."

## **ÁDER: THIRD OF EPIDEMICS TIED TO CHANGES IN LAND USE**

A third of epidemics is connected to changes in land use, with diminishing biodiversity giving way to a growing number of epidemics, President János Áder told a conference. In a video message to the 17th National Higher Education Student Conference for Environmental Science (OFKD) in Gödöllő, near Budapest, Áder noted the effects of the pandemic on economy, budgets, the labour market and society worldwide.

In the past 60-70 years, human activity has become the factor with the largest impact on nature, he told the conference. The Earth's population has grown three-and-a-half-fold in a mere century, he noted. By 2050, three-quarters of the Earth's population is expected to live in cities, and half in areas suffering from acute lack of water, he said. The OFKD conference was pushed back from April to September due to the first wave of the coronavirus epidemic in Hungary.

## **FOUR DIE, REGISTERED CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS UP 726 IN HUNGARY**

Four Covid-19 patients, all elderly and with underlying illnesses, have died in the past 24 hours, while the number of registered coronavirus

infections in Hungary has risen by 726 to 13,879, [koronavirus.gov.hu](http://koronavirus.gov.hu) said on Tuesday morning. The number of fatalities stands at 646, and 4,130 people have made a recovery. There are 9,103 active infections and 306 Covid-19 patients are being treated in hospital, 17 on ventilators. Altogether 28,584 people are in official home quarantine and 557,864 tests have been carried out. The website 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. The Budapest municipality tightened regulations on mask-wearing in public places and introduced fines for violators and establishment owners. Most infections have been registered in Budapest (5,992), followed by Pest County (1,960) and the counties of Fejér (770), Hajdú-Bihar (495), Komárom-Esztergom (488) and Győr-Moson-Sopron (487). Békés County has the fewest infections (88).

## **GULYÁS: HUNGARY, AUSTRIA TAKE SIMILAR MEASURES TO HALT EPIDEMIC**

The Hungarian and Austrian governments have taken similar measures to halt the novel coronavirus

epidemic, the head of the Prime Minister's Office said after talks with Austrian political leaders in Vienna. "It is a shared view that the tasks are the same: to protect the health of the people and ensure the operation of the country," Gergely Gulyás told MTI, assessing his one-day visit to the Austrian capital. Gulyás held talks with EU Affairs Minister Karoline Edtstadler, Integration Minister Susanne Raab and Karlheinz Kopf, second president of the National Council, as well as the secretary general of the governing ÖVP party and the leader of opposition FPÖ. "We hope that our efforts will be successful and life can soon return to normal," he said.

Gulyás said relations between the Hungarian and Austrian governments are sound, the two countries are partners and allies, adding that Hungary has friendly relations with both the ÖVP and the FPÖ. He said both governments are aware of the new dangers posed by migration, which has once again become a focus of European politics since the latest developments in the refugee camp in Moria on the island of Lesbos. They are also committed to implementing the accord reached at the EU summit in July, Gulyás said.

### **SOCIALISTS TO HOLD ONLINE CONGRESS ON SATURDAY**

The opposition Socialist Party will hold its congress to elect officials on Saturday, with the current head

of the party's national board, Ágnes Kunhalmi, and party leader Bertalan Tóth in a joint bid to co-lead the party, the head of the nominating committee said. Imre Szekeres said that two lists had been submitted by Monday's deadline, but the one submitted by the party's spokeswoman on health policy, Szófia Havas, had fallen foul of the party's regulations. Also, former party leader Attila Mesterházy did not qualify. István Hiller, a deputy speaker of parliament, is vying to head the party's national board. Saturday's congress is also scheduled to approve the party's election programme. This will form the basis for negotiations with other opposition parties. The Socialists were originally scheduled to hold their biannual congress to elect officials during the summer but this was postponed due to the novel coronavirus epidemic. The candidates decided online to amend the party's basic regulations and introduce male and female co-leaders.

### **HUNGARIAN DIPLOMATIC ACADEMY STARTS FIRST ACADEMIC YEAR**

The launch of an independent Hungarian Diplomatic Academy is a milestone in Hungarian diplomacy, as the country's diplomats have so far been always trained in institutions "under the influence of world powers", Orsolya Pacsay-Tomassich said at the

celebration launching the academic year at the Hungarian Diplomatic Academy. The academy aims to train professionals committed to representing and protecting Hungary's political and economic interests, Pacsay-Tomassich, a state secretary of the foreign affairs ministry, said. The academy was set up under the auspices of the foreign ministry and launched two training programmes in 2020, the diplomat training programme and the diplomatic leadership programme, in cooperation with the National Public Service University (NKE).

### **CÖF-CÖKA: PEOPLE WHO DISREGARD EUROPE'S NATIVE PEOPLES ACCUSE HUNGARY OF RACISM**

The head of the Hungarian CÖF-CÖKA civil organisation has said that those who disregard Europe's native peoples and impose their own views on how societies should be composed were the ones who accused Hungary of racism and anti-Semitism. László Csizmadia told a press conference that a "new coalition of far-left and far-right politicians in Brussels" had arisen from a bedrock of their own particular racist ideologies. He accused such people of "arrogance" and of attacking the protectors of classical democracy and the rule of law. The NGO head, who is closely allied with the Fidesz government, said they were intent

on undermining sovereign nations by citing supposed violations of fundamental human rights.

The Hungarian government, he added, promoted and practiced zero tolerance of racism and anti-Semitism. Most Hungarians want equality throughout the entire community of the nation, he said. Csizmadia said Nazi and Bolshevik extremist ideologies must not be allowed to take root in Hungary.

**EU COURT: TELECOMS INFRINGE NET NEUTRALITY BY WAIVING TARIFFS FOR SOME APPS**

The European Union’s top court has ruled that mobile operators favouring some apps over others when setting their tariffs violate the principle of net neutrality. The decision is in connection with a lawsuit involving Telenor Magyarország in Hungary. Telenor had offered customers zero-tariff packages in which certain applications were deducted from the consumption tally. A Hungarian court had sought guidance from the Luxembourg court on the issue that goes to the heart of whether telecom firms should abide by the principle of net neutrality. Blocking or slowing down traffic for certain types of application is seen as a violation of that principle. Hungary’s media and telecoms watchdog (NMHH) argued in its suit that Telenor’s package breached

the net neutrality regulation that ISPs may not discriminate between the internet content they make available. The EU Court of Justice on Tuesday interpreted the regulation in question for the first time.

**CITIZENS’ INITIATIVE FOR UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME TO LAUNCH ON SEPT 25**

A European citizens’ initiative will be launched on Sept. 25, calling for the introduction of universal basic income in all European Union member states, a Párbeszéd lawmaker said. Bence Tordai, the party’s deputy group leader, noted at a press conference that one million signatures must be gathered before for the European Commission to table the proposal.

Party co-leader Tímea Szabó said nearly half of Hungarian livelihoods had been endangered by the coronavirus epidemic. The pandemic had shown that people and governments alike can be caught off guard by unexpected events, Szabó said. During the first wave, hundreds of thousands of people lost their jobs or a proportion of their salaries, she said. “We can already see that the second wave is likely to be a lot worse,” she added. Universal basic income is the only long-term solution to mitigating such events, she said.

Tordai noted that the current week is International Basic Income Week. Round-table discussions

will be held throughout the week, he noted, followed by a “March for Basic Income” on Saturday, “if the pandemic situation allows”.

**CONSTRUCTION SECTOR OUTPUT DOWN 21% IN JULY**

Construction sector output in Hungary dropped by 21% in July after a contraction of 15.7% in the previous month, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. Month on month, output grew by 3.5%, based on seasonally and working day-adjusted data. In absolute terms, construction sector output came to 336.3 billion forints (EUR 940.3m) in July. The sector’s order stock at the end of July was down by 21% from twelve months earlier, as building orders rose by 5% while civil engineering orders fell by 31.4%. New order volume was down by 41.5%, with new orders in the building segment falling by 38.7% and new civil engineering orders dropping by 43.6%.

Commenting on the data, market analysts said the construction industry was not taking a direct hit by the coronavirus crisis or by the proximate effects of restrictions, but rather by investor uncertainty, reflected in declining orders. The analysts expect the sector to contract by around 10% in 2020 and that the sector would not contribute to GDP. Gábor Regős of Századvég Gazdaságkutató said the July figures might have been

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shaped by postponed investments due to falling revenues and an unstable economic environment. The construction industry is likely to further hobble Hungary's economy in Q3, Regős said, adding that government measures such as re-introducing a VAT cut to newly built homes would help to revive the economy.

K&H lead analyst Dávid Németh said the setback was to be expected, noting that the sector contracted from a high base. It is likely to have bottomed out in July, but end-year contraction is still likely to be around 10%, he said. András Horváth of Takarékbank said the sector's performance was in line with other areas of the economy. Order stocks have fallen partly due to outgoing EU funding projects, he said, adding that the government, however, was launching new investments to stabilise demand. A fall in demand may later hit home investments and renovations unless the economy rebounds within a relatively short time, he said. Meanwhile, business and industrial investments are proceeding according to schedule, and are expected to continue to do so unless the crisis becomes extremely protracted, he said.

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## **BUDAPEST FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME LAUNCHED FOR YOUNG US SCHOLARS**

A full-time fellowship programme for young US scholars and professionals has been launched in Hungary by two organisations. Dubbed Budapest Fellowship Programme, the 10-month scheme offers an opportunity to participants to gain a more thorough understanding of central and eastern Europe, including Hungary, specifically in the areas of history and culture, organisers told a press conference. The programme has been co-organised by the Hungary Initiatives Foundation (HIF), an NGO set up in Washington, DC, in 2013 to preserve and promote an appreciation of Hungarian culture, art and science, and the Budapest-based Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC).

Balázs Orbán, the head of MCC's board, highlighted the "strategic importance" of the programme, noting that four fellows would start their Hungary-related research at the National Public Service University, the Committee of National Remembrance, the Danube Institute and the Research Institute for National Strategy. He expressed hope that the fellows participating in the complex programme will have

a better understanding of Hungary's endeavours and contribute to further developing high-level bilateral relations. Anna Smith Lacey, the executive director of HIF, said that the fellows would take part in field trips in Hungary, participate in seminars on Hungarian history and attend Hungarian language courses.

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## **CENTRE SHOWCASING CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGIES OPENS IN BUDAPEST**

A centre showcasing cutting-edge technologies has opened in Budapest at the Új Hidegkuti Nándor Stadium. The EDU and FUN Digital Experience Centre was inaugurated on Tuesday. The centre is a place to discover and try out the latest infocommunication and digital devices, Tamás Schanda, the parliamentary state secretary of the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, said. Schoolchildren can try out 3D printing and other smart technologies such as robotics, he noted. He said Hungarian young people should be "winners of the future". "Our future largely hinges on technological development and digitalisation," he said, adding that the 430 million forint (EUR 1.2m) complex was designed with developing digital knowledge in mind.