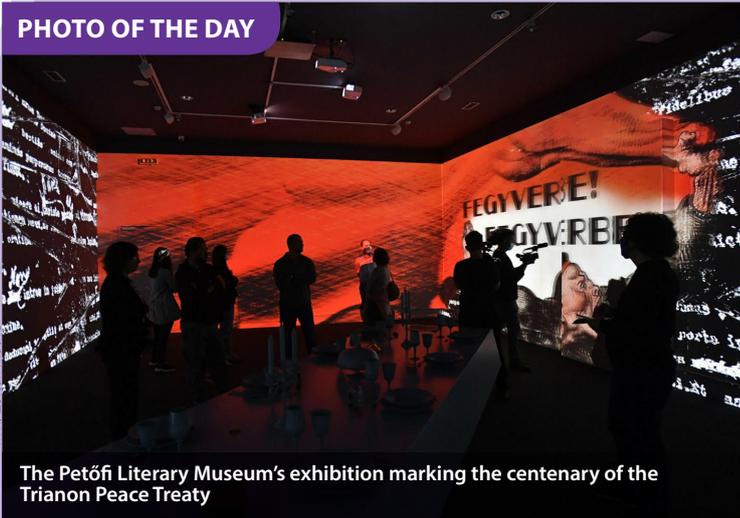


PHOTO OF THE DAY



The Petőfi Literary Museum's exhibition marking the centenary of the Trianon Peace Treaty

UPCOMING EVENTS

Plenary session of parliament

1849 Arad martyrs commemorated

Coronavirus updates

Stats office releases industry figures for August

TOP STORY

TOP COURT TO GET NEW HEAD

Zsolt András Varga has been nominated to serve as president of the Kúria, Hungary's supreme court, by President János Áder.

Varga has accepted the nomination and will succeed Péter Darák as head of the Kúria effective Jan. 1, 2021, according to a document on parliament's website. The president of the Kúria is elected by parliament in a secret ballot for a nine-year term. Varga graduated from the Faculty of Law at Budapest's Eötvös Loránd University in 1995 before going on to obtain a PhD degree there. He was habilitated at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University. Varga has worked as a university professor since 2012. He worked at several prosecutor's offices in Budapest before joining the Parliamentary Commissioner's Office. He later became a member of the Venice Commission and served as a constitutional judge from 2014. Between 2017 and 2019 he was vice-chair of the Venice Commission's subcommittee for international law, and later the subcommittee for constitutional law. Varga is also a member of the public body of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

FIGURES INDICATE VIRUS MEASURES EFFECTIVE

Hungary's coronavirus death ratio, 85.1 in one million people, puts the country in 12th place among European Union member states, the daily Magyar Nemzet says. The proportion of people dying is over ten times higher in Belgium, the country with the worst indicator in Europe. According to the paper, the situation is also "much worse" in Belgium, Spain, Italy and Sweden than in Hungary, while the death ratio is over five times higher in France and it is 113.7 in Germany. Mortality figures are only better in Greece, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, the paper said.

The paper also noted that the mortality rate was much better in Hungary than in spring. In the past ten days 113 people died altogether, while around 1,000 new cases were reported daily. During the first wave, a similar number of people died, but the number of new cases was about one tenth of the current figures, Magyar Nemzet wrote.

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AMENDED FOR V4 COUNTRIES

The government has decided to amend restrictions for travellers from countries in the Visegrad Group. Earlier regulations for travellers from V4 countries expired on Sept. 30. Hungarian citizens and family

members returning to Hungary from the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia, if they had booked accommodation in any of the V4 countries prior to the introduction of the current restrictions, are exempted from quarantine if they present one negative PCR test result. Until November 1, Czech, Polish and Slovak citizens who have booked accommodation in Hungary for October prior to the introduction of the restrictions also get exemption from quarantine if they present one negative PCR test result, he added. The government decree enters into force on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said Visegrad Group countries are working to further tighten their cooperation in tackling the crisis. After talks with Tomáš Petříček, his Czech counterpart, in Prague, Szijjártó said, "We are in agreement that a mechanism should be set up to coordinate measures and exchange experiences." Czech nationals who had earlier booked holidays in Hungary can, like last month, freely enter the country in October, he added.

ELEVEN FATALITIES, REGISTERED INFECTIONS UP 905 IN HUNGARY

Eleven Covid-19 patients have died in the past 24 hours, while the number of registered coronavirus infections in Hungary has risen by 905 to 31,480, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Monday morning. The number of fatalities

stands at 833, and 8,165 people have made a recovery. There are 22,482 active infections and 649 Covid-19 patients are being treated in hospital, 40 on ventilators. Altogether 20,199 people are in official home quarantine and 765,598 tests have been carried out.

Most infections have been registered in Budapest (11,231), followed by Pest County (4,164) and the counties of Győr-Moson-Sopron (1,667), Hajdú-Bihar (1,400) Fejér (1,353), Csongrád-Csanád (1,335) and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (1,328). Tolna County has the fewest infections (303).

The Hungarian National Blood Transfusion Service has appealed to people who have recovered from the novel coronavirus to donate blood plasma for treating Covid-19 patients. The Southern Pest Central Hospital and the blood transfusion service welcome blood donations from people with a PCR positive result but who have been without symptoms for at least three weeks.

ÁDER: CLIMATE CHANGE LONGER TERM ISSUE THAN PANDEMIC

The issues of climate change and sustainability will remain relevant after the coronavirus pandemic is over, President János Áder said, opening Hungary's Sustainability Week, an event during which schools raise awareness of sustainability. "Everyone can tell that something has changed in their environment,"

the president said in a video message. Devastating wildfires, unprecedented floods, heat records, long droughts, the extinction of certain species and locust plagues are just some of the signs of climate change, he said. Meanwhile, the speeding up of the water cycle has disrupted precipitation patterns, producing extreme rains and often devastating storms, he said. Natural disasters like these have the potential to cause food shortages in many countries, leading to famines and eventually social tensions and political instability, Áder warned. "It is not by chance that United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has sounded the alarm and asked developed countries to contribute 200 billion dollars to the global fight against climate change," the president added.

The planet's rising population results in rising consumption, Áder said, noting that water consumption is growing twice, and energy consumption three times as fast as the population. But these rising energy demands are for the most part still being met with the use of coal-fired plants when carbon emissions are the leading cause of climate change, he said. As part of its fight against climate change, Hungary will be closing its last coal-fired power plant, plans to increase the capacity of its solar plants and will make 90% of its energy production carbon neutral within ten years, Áder said. Also, new buses used for public transport will all be electric and a new afforestation scheme will

help grow hundreds of thousands of hectares of new forest across the country, he added.

GOVT ECONOMIC POLICY GEARED TO FIGHTING CORONA FALLOUT

The government is focusing on seven areas to moderate the negative effects of the pandemic and to put the economy quickly on a growth path once it is over, Márton Nagy, an advisor to the prime minister, said in an interview to the business daily Világgazdaság. Every economic measure is being formulated in harmony with the three main goals stated by the prime minister: jumpstarting the economy, protecting families and developing areas of the country outside the capital, Nagy said. The seven areas are support for family households, addressing demographic problems, extending the debt repayment moratorium, support for investments, boosting the financing capacity of specialised state financial institutions, making effective use of European Union resources and investing abroad. Hungary can maintain its economic growth rate 2 percentage points above the EU average, he said. This year's 5-6% GDP contraction will meet this target if annual growth next year is 5%, he added. Nagy also said it may be possible to raise the number of completed homes to 44,000 a year and meet the target of stock renewal.

RETAIL SALES DOWN 1.2% IN AUG

Retail sales in Hungary fell by an annual 1.2% in August after edging up in July and June following lockdown declines in the previous two months, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. Adjusted for calendar year effects, retail sales were down 0.7% from August 2019. Adjusted food sales edged down 0.2%, non-food sales were up 1.2% and fuel sales fell by 4.5%.

JUSTICE MINISTER: EC HAS NO AUTHORITY ON RULE OF LAW

The European Commission has no authority to compile comparative assessments of the rule of law in European Union members and introduce sanctions on that basis, Judit Varga, the justice minister, told public broadcaster Kossuth Rádió, citing a 2014 position by the European Council under which dialogue on the rule of law should be conducted at intergovernmental level, without discrimination. Varga said the EU wants to bypass that position by "establishing a regime which could pass judgement over member states through a qualified vote based on information from the commission". The state of the rule of law in member states should not be linked to access to EU funding because that would lead to more abuses of the system, Varga insisted.

TRAFFIC IN HUNGARY AIR SPACE FALLS BY MORE THAN 50%

The number of overflights and flights arriving to and departing from Budapest fell by more than 50% in January-September 2020, according to HungaroControl. Hungarian air controllers assisted with the navigation of almost 257,000 overflights and more than 41,000 arriving and departing flights by the end of September. Air traffic at Budapest's Liszt Ferenc International Airport started declining due to the pandemic from March 9 and the biggest monthly drop was registered in May so far. On May 2, there were only 15 arriving and departing flights at the airport, down 95% from the same day of 2019. The number of flights began to increase in early summer but started stagnating from mid-July. The busiest day during the pandemic period was August 22, when HungaroControl managed close to

2,000 aircraft. One year earlier, this number was close to 4,000. Unlike in normal years, when summer is the busiest time, this year the period preceding the pandemic, January showed the highest air traffic numbers, HungaroControl said.

GOVT PLANS GRANTS FOR SMES IN UNDERDEVELOPED REGIONS

Hungary's government plans to launch a grant scheme supporting up to 70% of investment costs at SMEs in underdeveloped regions in January, state secretary for economic strategy and regulation László György has said. Grants of between 2 million forints and 10 million will be available for businesses in 1,202 localities in designated "free business zones", while grants up to 60 million will be available in 162 "converging settlements". The money is available to companies in all sectors, including commerce, services and construction. It may be used for payroll costs or employee

training as well as for equipment, machinery, property developments or IT upgrades. The ministry has already invited input from the public on the programme.

BUDAPEST MUSEUM OF ASIAN ART TO REOPEN TO PUBLIC ON SAT

The Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asiatic Arts will reopen to the public on Saturday after a closure forced by the outbreak of the coronavirus in the spring. The museum's Made in Asia exhibition, which was mounted last year to celebrate its 100th anniversary, can be viewed on Saturdays and Sundays between 11am and 4pm. The exhibition presents the most outstanding artefacts of the museum's Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian, Southeast Asian, Mongolian, Tibetan, Nepali, Middle Eastern and Zichy collection. On Saturday, the museum on Andrassy Street will host a presentation of Hungarian photographer Zoltán Gaál's book on Japan.