

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Tamás Kovács

Olympic Gymnast Ágnes Keleti with cake for her upcoming birthday at home in Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office releases foreign trade turnover data for Nov

Finance ministry releases public finance figures for 2020

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

FDI ROBUST DURING PANDEMIC

Foreign direct investments in Hungary amounted to an unprecedented 1,676 billion forints (EUR 4.7bn) during the pandemic last year, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said in an interview.

Péter Szijjártó told public broadcaster Kossuth Rádió that Hungary's highly skilled workforce, its political stability, financing environment, logistics and infrastructure were all factors when it came to attracting investments. The minister emphasised the importance of political stability, noting that Hungary's government has a democratic mandate to govern with a two-thirds majority, guaranteeing the lowest personal income tax and the lowest single corporate tax in Europe. Szijjártó noted American investment magazine Site Selection has selected Hungary as one of the 10 most popular investment destinations in the world for the third time in a row. He insisted that the government's policy of "opening up to the East" had been vindicated. Like in 2019, investments last year were from eastern rather than western countries. In 2020 China overtook South Korea as the biggest source of foreign direct investment from the East.

Big incentive schemes have aided the purchase of new machinery, production lines, and the introduction of new technologies, he said.

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>



ÁDER, ORBÁN CONGRATULATE GYMNAST KELETI ON 100TH BIRTHDAY

President János Áder congratulated in a letter and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in a Facebook video five-time Olympic champion gymnast Ágnes Keleti on her 100th birthday. Áder said that Keleti's global achievements as a gymnast and her dedication to her work as a trainer was an example to everyone. He said he felt honoured to personally know her and experience Keleti's "enviable zest for life".

Orbán said Hungary was a "fantastic but difficult place, surrounded by empires where we always had to fight for our lives, freedom and independence". At the same time, Orbán said "God has sent us great heroes ... who showed us an example in perseverance, dedication, fantastic performance and the love of our nation", and added that Keleti was such a hero.

The veteran gymnast was also congratulated by Thomas Bach, head of the International Olympic Committee, and leaders of the Hungarian Olympic Committee.

CORONAVIRUS - 94 FATALITIES, 1,778 MORE INFECTIONS

Fully 94 Covid patients, generally elderly and suffering from an underlying illness, died over the past 24 hours, while 1,778 new infections were officially registered,

bringing the total number of infected to 342,237, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Sunday. The death toll has risen to 10,648, while 197,936 people have made a recovery. The number of active infections stands at 133,653, while there are 4,980 hospitalised Covid patients, 357 on a ventilator. Altogether 22,962 people are in official home quarantine, and the number of tests carried out has risen to 2,840,024. Most infections have been registered in Budapest (64,422) and Pest County (42,703) so far, followed by the counties of Győr-Moson-Sopron (19,540), Hajdú-Bihar (19,535) and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (19,227). The county least affected by the infection is Tolna (7,101).

ROMANIA LIFTS QUARANTINE REQUIREMENT FOR ENTRANTS FROM HUNGARY

Entrants from Hungary are no longer required to stay in isolation in Romania, according to official information from that country. With regard to a decrease in new coronavirus infections per 100,000 residents in Hungary, Romanian authorities decided to take Hungary off the list of countries whose travellers must stay in a two-week quarantine on entering Romania.

BUDAPEST MAYOR ENCOURAGES RESIDENTS TO GET VACCINATED

Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony has called on residents to "trust the

vaccine against coronavirus, doctors and researchers, and volunteer for inoculation in the interest of protecting themselves and others". In a video posted on Facebook, Karácsony suggested that confidence in the vaccine had nothing to do with political affiliations. "Believe me, as an opposition mayor I have a thousand reasons not to trust the government, but trusting the vaccine is not an opinion on the government or the opposition". "We have the weapon to stop the pandemic at hand and we cannot afford not using it," Karácsony said, adding that he had registered for vaccination. In his video, Karácsony again offered cooperation to the government in getting the vaccine to as many people as possible.

LMP: VACCINATION SHOULD NOT BE CONDITIONAL ON REGISTRATION

The opposition LMP party has called on the government to "make it clear if registration is a requirement for getting vaccinated" against the coronavirus, adding that residents who have not registered should not have to forfeit access to a vaccine. LMP's co-leader Máté Kanász-Nagy said on Sunday that all residents should be provided the vaccine "freely, easily and without any preconditions", adding that his party objected to mandatory registration.

Kanász-Nagy argued that public trust would be promoted if vaccination were not conditional on registration,

and he called for regularly updated public information on the pandemic. Further, doctors and health experts should be allowed to give interviews without any restrictions, he added.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: EUROPE ‘SHOULD BE GRATEFUL’ TO SALVINI

“The whole of Europe should be grateful” to Matteo Salvini, former interior minister of Italy, for “saving his homeland and saving Europe,” Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Facebook. He noted that Salvini was facing trial for blocking a ship of illegal migrants off the coasts of Italy in 2019. Szijjártó insisted that Salvini had tried to “prevent the violation of European borders and the trampling on European laws”. “Grazie Matteo!” he added.

BÓKA APPOINTED PM’S EUROPEAN AFFAIRS STATE SECRETARY

János Bóka, state secretary at the justice ministry, has been appointed to continue his work as the prime minister’s state secretary in charge of European Union affairs from Jan. 15, the PM Viktor Orbán’s press said. Bóka will assist the prime minister in his talks with EU institutions, participate

in preparations for government sessions with EU affairs on the agenda, and liaise with ministers over “the government’s position on Hungary’s EU membership”, Bertalan Havasi said.

OFFICIAL: GOVT SCRAPS PROCEDURAL FEES

Procedural fees will no longer be levied, a state secretary at the finance ministry said on Sunday, noting that government offices handled 1.5 million such cases each year whereby a flat fee of 3,000 forints was charged for any certificate including, for example, proof of a registered partnership.

The measure will leave 5 billion forints (EUR 13.9m) with taxpayers and companies per year, Norbert Izer said, calling the measure “a milestone in the history of taxation”. Procedures will be faster and simpler as a result, and this is expected to boost the country’s competitiveness, he added. Cutting the administrative burden on individuals and businesses is at least as important as reducing taxes, the state secretary said.

HUNGARY TO RENOVATE 1,000KM OF ROADS IN 2021

Hungary will repave about 1,000km of roads at a cost of 190 billion forints (EUR 520m) this year, the Innovation

and Technology Ministry said. The roadwork will be undertaken in more than 350 projects, the ministry said. József Szilvai, the CEO of state road maintenance company Magyar Közút Nonprofit, said 2021 would be a “record year” in terms of the number and scale of projects.

LISZT FERENC PASSENGER NUMBERS DECLINE 76% IN 2020

Passenger numbers at Liszt Ferenc International fell 76% to 3,859,379 last year as pandemic restrictions weighed, according to operator Budapest Airport. “Thanks to the responsible financial management of the previous years and our financially strong owners, the operation of Budapest Airport remains stable; the company’s financing is ensured,” the operator said. Budapest Airport expects an increase in passenger numbers “from the summer schedule period”, depending on the availability and the effectiveness of coronavirus vaccines, and it sees a possible return to 2019 passenger levels “by 2022-2023”. Budapest Airport noted that developments at Liszt Ferenc had continued during the pandemic and passengers would return to a “renewed and modern environment”.

