

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/György Varga

The Armed Forces' parachuting camp for cadets

UPCOMING EVENTS

Agriculture ministry officials on govt afforestation scheme

Announcement of higher education admission thresholds

53rd Blue Ribbon Round the Lake Balaton Race

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

GOVT INITIATES CHILD PROTECTION REFERENDUM

The government has decided to initiate a referendum on child protection, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said. "Brussels has attacked Hungary" over the country's child protection law banning "sexual propaganda" in schools and the media, he said.

Brussels now "demands changes to the education law and child protection regulations", the prime minister said in a video posted on Facebook, adding that "they complain that we do not allow what has become the Western European practice" with "LGBTQ activists going into kindergartens and schools to provide sexual information". "That is what Brussels bureaucrats want in Hungary, too," he insisted. "When pressure on our country is this strong, Hungary could only be protected by the common will of the people," he said.

The referendum is planned to ask citizens whether they "support that minors should attend school classes on the topic of sexual orientation without parental consent," or "support promoting gender change treatments among minors," whether they support that "gender reassignment surgery should be available to minors", that "media content influencing sexual development should be presented to minors without restrictions," and whether "media content depicting gender change should be presented to minors". The prime minister called on voters to say no to all those questions.

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>



GOVT SUBMITS CHILD PROTECTION REFERENDUM BID

Hungary's government on Wednesday officially submitted its referendum bid on child protection to the National Election Committee. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán announced earlier in the day that the government plans to ask the public five questions in connection with "sexual propaganda" in schools and the media. The National Election Committee will now have 60 days to assess the questions. The committee will approve the bid if the subject comes under the purview of parliament, if the questions do not touch on fields such as the budget or international treaties, and if they are worded clearly enough for the purpose. The committee's decision can be appealed within 15 days after release.

FIDESZ: LEFT WING SIDING WITH BRUSSELS, LGBT ACTIVISTS

Hungary's left wing has sided with Brussels and LGBT activists, ruling Fidesz said on Wednesday in response to the leftist parties' reactions to the prime minister's announcement of a planned referendum on child protection. "Brussels is abusing its powers and threatening Hungary only because Hungarian laws have forbidden sexual propaganda in kindergartens,

at school, on the television screen and in advertisements," Fidesz said in a statement. The left wing, however, has sided with Brussels, as it did in the case of migration, it said, adding that the "Brussels bureaucrats and Soros organisations" saw it as an insult that LGBT activists "are no longer allowed to get close to children in Hungary". The Fidesz-Christian Democrat alliance supports holding a referendum on the child protection law and will continue to take a firm stand in defence of children, the statement said.

DOBREV: REFERENDUM DESIGNED TO DEFLECT FROM 'REAL PROBLEMS'

The recently announced referendum on Hungary's child protection law serves to deflect from the fact that the European Union will not send "a single cent" of funding to Hungary "as long as its prime minister is called Viktor Orbán", the opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) said. By rejecting the Hungarian government's reconstruction plan on Tuesday, the EU had "turned off the money taps", DK's MEP Klára Dobrev said. Other forms of funding could go the same way, as they are subject to the same regulations, she said. Dobrev insisted that the EU was acting "to protect Hungarians" and said that "another government and regime are needed to ensure that the funds will end up with Hungarian SMEs, farmers, civil organisations and local governments."

According to Dobrev, the prime minister is "acting in despair" and seeks to "cover up reality with pseudo-questions". Orbán has initiated a referendum "concerning non-existent problems and non-existent enemies just to avoid having to talk about substantive issues," Dobrev said. "Viktor Orbán surveilled his own people using dishonest and unlawful means, and the EU withholds funding so the Hungarian government cannot distribute it among its oligarchs and family members," she said, referring to press reports on the surveillance of Hungarian journalists and opposition politicians. The "new government of the republic" after the elections next April will make all data on surveillance public, and will reopen negotiations on EU funding, she said.

POPE FRANCIS TO MEET ÁDER, ORBÁN IN SEPT

Pope Francis will meet Hungarian President János Áder and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on September 12 in Budapest, the day he is scheduled to celebrate the mass concluding the International Eucharistic Congress, organisers said. The pontiff will meet Áder and Orbán, as well as Hungarian bishops, in the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts in the morning, before talking to representatives of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary and of Jewish communities. The mass will be held at 11.30am on Heroes Square, and the pope is scheduled to leave for a three-day visit to Slovakia around 3pm.

MILITARY OFFERS NEW VOLUNTEER SERVICE TO YOUTH

The Hungarian armed forces will offer volunteer careers to young people finishing or dropping out of secondary school, the defence minister announced on Wednesday. Tibor Benkő said that volunteers would receive a six-month training, after which they could decide if they wanted to serve in the army for a longer term. Applicants are welcome to contact any recruitment facility or apply by email from Thursday on, Benkő said.

HUNGARY IN DANGER OF BEING OVERRUN BY FOREIGN WASTE, SAYS OPPOSITION

If it is left up to the government, Hungary will be overrun by waste from other countries, the group leader of opposition LMP said on Wednesday. Addressing an online press conference in the town of Tamási, in western Hungary, László Lóránt Keresztes said several thousand cubic metres of plastic waste from Italy had been dumped in the area, some 200 metres from the closest residential area. Though a Budapest-based company has been given a permit to process the waste, there is as yet no sign that it was being processed, Keresztes said, adding that the company was not even connected to the public utility grids and had not

observed basic fire safety regulations. Keresztes blamed the “flawed legal environment” and procedures for the company in question being given the permit to process the waste. After the opposition’s victory in next year’s election, the new government will have to review the relevant laws and new ones that apply stricter punishments in such cases, he said. Attila Tóth of the Democratic Coalition criticised the Tamási local council for its silence on the issue and called for immediate steps to remove the waste.

HUNGARY RECORDS NO COVID FATALITIES, 56 NEW INFECTIONS

The novel coronavirus claimed no victim over the past 24 hours, while 56 new infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said. So far 5,578,183 people have received a first jab, while 5,327,325 have been fully vaccinated. The number of active infections has declined to 34,875, while hospitals are treating 76 Covid patients, 10 of whom need respiratory assistance. There are 1,409 people in official quarantine, while 6,268,163 tests have been officially carried out. Since the first outbreak, 808,945 infections have been registered, while fatalities have remained unchanged at 30,019. Fully 744,051 people have made a recovery. So far, most infections have been registered in Budapest and Pest County, followed by the counties of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Győr-Moson-Sopron and Hajdú-Bihar.

BUDAPEST PROBE FINDS QUARTER OF ELDERLY SINOPHARM RECIPIENTS UNPROTECTED

A series of tests conducted on Budapest residents older than 60 who have been inoculated with the Sinopharm vaccine has found that 24.2% of the participants have no sufficient protection against Covid-19, the mayor’s office told MTI on Wednesday. So far, 3,805 tests were carried out, while the programme aims at completing 20,000. The sample is not representative, the statement said. At the same time, a research by a group of experts headed by academic Balázs Sarkadi and biological statistician Tamás Ferenci has produced similar results, the statement said. The testing in Budapest was organised by the city and local councils.

SMES IN FOCUS OF 2021-2027 SMART SPECIALISATION STRATEGY, SAYS MINISTRY

The Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) adopted by the government for the period 2021-2027 puts the corporate sector in its focus and is aimed at supporting and enhancing the productivity of SMEs, the innovation and technology ministry said. The strategy identifies priority areas of support which include agriculture and food production, health care, digitalisation of the economy,

creative industries, energy, services and cutting-edge technologies, the ministry said in a statement. The coronavirus epidemic has shown the vast potential in the Hungarian SME sector. A continued support must be provided to ensure a stable operation of SMEs, which employ more than two thirds of Hungarian workers, it said. "We are working to make Hungary one of the major innovators in Europe by 2030 by increasing the efficiency of the corporate sector," the statement quoted State Secretary for Innovation József Bódis as saying.

LISZT FERENC AIRPORT CARGO VOLUME JUMPS 35.9% IN H1

Cargo volume at Liszt Ferenc International airport reached 86,798 tonnes in the first half of the year, up by 35.9% from the same period a year earlier, operator Budapest Airport said. In June alone the airport handled 15,233 tonnes of cargo, 52.6% more than in June 2020 and 41.2% more than in June 2019.

Budapest Airport CEO Chris Dinsdale said that performance over the past 12 months, when the airport handled 157,402 tonnes of cargo, confirmed that the cargo business is of key importance for them. József Kossuth, head of cargo for Budapest Airport, noted that Alibaba Group, one of the largest e-commerce businesses in China and its logistics partner, Cainiao, chose Budapest Airport as their regional hub. The company's presence in Budapest contributes to the arrival of approximately 2.5 million items per month currently by air, which will increase strongly over the coming months, he said.

JEWISH CULTURAL FESTIVAL IN BUDAPEST TO BE HELD AUG 22-29

Budapest's Jewish Cultural Festival will be held at five venues between August 22 and 25, and will feature concerts, thematic walks, book readings and discussions, organisers told MTI on Wednesday. The historic synagogue in downtown Rumbach Street will feature concerts and readings after a 3.2

billion forint (EUR 3.9m) government-funded reconstruction, Péter Kunos of the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities (Mazsihisz) told a press conference. Events will also be held at the Dohány Street and Hegedűs Street synagogues, the Bálint Cultural Centre and Róth Miksa Memorial House, he said. The opening concert at the Dohány Street synagogue will feature Ukrainian klezmer band Kommuna Lux and the Budapest Klezmer Band. Other events will feature performers such as the Boban Marković Orkestar and Hungarian singer Bea Palya. Tamás Berki, Mariann Falusi, Katica Illényi and others will perform at the concert Somewhere over the Rainbow. Soprano Erika Miklósa will perform on August 25. The Rumbach Street synagogue will be home to Hungarian singers and actors Andi Malek and Bandi Jäger performing highlights of the musical Yentl, and a concert of Yiddish folk songs, performed by Dániel Gryllus, Vilmos Gryllus and Ágnes Szalóki. Violinist Orsolya Korcsolán and the Anima Musicae group will also perform.