

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Giant mural of Hungarian-born BioNTech biochemist Katalin Karikó in Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

PM attends Bled Strategic Forum

Coronavirus updates

Budapest general assembly meeting

Socialists' presser on Budapest student city project

Stats office releases 2nd reading of Q2 GDP figures

TOP STORY

MINISTER: EDU SPENDING TRIPLED SINCE 2010

The finance minister said ahead of the new school year starting on September 1 that government funding for public education and family support has tripled since 2010.

Addressing the inauguration of a new school building in Budapest, Mihály Varga said that over the last ten years, government spending on public education had increased by 735 billion forints (EUR 2.1bn). Zoltán Maruzsa, the state secretary in charge of public education, said the government has recently spent 350 billion forints in state and European Union funds to upgrade schools in 900 locations around the country. Gabriella Hajnal, who heads KLIK, the public school operating body, said caring for special needs students would always be a priority. These students are best served in integrated classrooms where they feel most accepted, she said. Hajnal added that she hoped that the principles of the Gyermekek Háza (House of Children) school in the 2nd district, which provides integrated education for special-needs children, would also be embraced by other schools in the country.

ORBÁN TO ATTEND BLED STRATEGIC FORUM

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán will take part in a panel discussion with other European leaders at the Bled Strategic Forum in Slovenia on Wednesday, his press chief said. The panel on the future of Europe will also be joined by the presidents of the European Council and the European Parliament, the prime ministers of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Greece as well as the president of Serbia, Bertalan Havasi said. Several former European leaders have also been invited to the forum, he said. One main topic of this year's conference organised by the Slovenian government will be the need to boost Europe's resilience so that it is better prepared to meet the challenges facing the continent. Other topics include the post-pandemic recovery, digital and green transformation as well as European Union enlargement.

The panel discussions will be streamed on the BSF's website, the forum's organisers have said.

HUNGARY RECORDS ONE CORONAVIRUS DEATH, 110 NEW INFECTIONS

One Covid patient died over the past 24 hours, while 110 new coronavirus infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Tuesday. So far 5,754,566 people have received a first jab, while 5,507,371 have been fully vaccinated. Fully 304,000 Hungarians

have already received booster jabs. The number of active infections stands at 4,834, while hospitals are treating 119 Covid patients, 13 of whom need respiratory assistance. There are 1,344 people in official quarantine, while 6,574,523 tests have been officially carried out. Since the first outbreak, 812,337 infections have been registered, while fatalities have remained unchanged at 30,058. Fully 777,445 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.

KARÁCSONY PRESENTS HONORARY CITIZENSHIP TITLES, PUBLIC SERVICE AWARDS

Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony presented honorary citizen's titles to artists, writers, journalists, politicians and academics, and handed out prizes for public service. Recipients of the honorary citizenship titles bestowed in 2020 included the city's former mayors, Gábor Demszky and István Tarlós. Addressing the ceremony, Karácsony described the past year as "one of the most difficult years in the city's history". "Though the coronavirus pandemic was a real test of strength for everyone, it also showed us the true face of Budapest," the mayor said. "This city has always been one of revolutions and one that looks to the future, but the crisis has shown that we can be

very disciplined, that we can look out for each other and act as one big family and a strong community." Karácsony said Budapest was proud of the award recipients. In addition to the honorary citizen's titles, Karácsony also handed over the Pro Urbe Budapest Awards, the For Budapest Awards, the Gábor Zalabai Equality Award, the For the Capital Memorial Flag Award, the Dr. Sándor Barna Commemorative Medal and the For the Service of the Capital Award.

GOVT OFFICIAL DELIVERS SCHOOL SUPPLIES TO VOJVODINA HUNGARIAN FIRST-GRADERS

The state secretary responsible for the policy for Hungarians abroad delivered a donation of school supplies for the 1,392 first-graders who will begin attending Hungarian-language elementary schools in Vojvodina, Serbia, on Tuesday.

Árpád János Potápi pressed the importance of preserving Hungarian language education in the region, and noted that the government was also supporting students in Hungarian-language higher education, "ensuring that this year, everyone in Hungarian education from crèches to university receives government support."

Potápi welcomed that the number of children starting school in their mother tongue was up this academic year. The government has allocated 23 million forints (EUR 66,000) to the programme, he said. He thanked the Hungarian

National Council and the Association of Vojvodina Hungarians for the decade-long cooperation. The Rákóczi Association, a Hungarian NGO, is capping the aid with a donation of schoolbags for every first grader, Potápi said.

LMP URGES PAY HIKE FOR TEACHERS

The only way to alleviate Hungary's shortage of teachers is by offering teachers competitive wages, opposition LMP said.

Addressing an online press conference on the start of the school year, lawmaker Krisztina Hohn said that even though the state provides students with free textbooks, parents were still struggling to cover the costs of getting their children ready for the new school year. Though family allowances were disbursed early this month to help families get ready for the new school year, the best solution would have been to give families an extra month's allowance, she said. Hohn also called on the government to equip schools with the digital tools they would need should they need to switch back to online classes due to another wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

DK CALLS FOR RESTORING RESPECT TO TEACHING PROFESSION

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) will be determined to restore respect to the teaching profession if

the party enters government next year, DK's prime ministerial candidate said.

Klára Dobrev told a press conference on Facebook that she had held consultations with teachers association representatives earlier in the day and it was agreed that the transformation of education should begin with a wage increase for teachers. New teachers in Romania earn 80 euros more a month than in Hungary, she said, adding that DK would "put in order" teachers' wages over a five-year period, and adjust their increase also to minimum wage increases. DK would restore the public servant status to teachers, pay proper overtime fees to them and change the "current humiliating classification system" in the profession, she said.

DK lawmaker Gergely Arató said the party wanted a government that would also address problems faced by teachers, including a staff shortage.

Ruling Fidesz said in reaction that the left was being "hypocritical" on education. The party said in a statement that thousands of teachers had "ended up on the street" during DK leader Ferenc Gyurcsány's tenure as prime minister between 2004 and 2009.

"Gyurcsány and his party always try to swing teachers around on a string during election campaigns, but when they were in government they casually closed hundreds of schools, put thousands of teachers on the street and made them work for humiliatingly low wages," Fidesz said. "The left is still led by the same Gyurcsány who held teachers in contempt while he was in government."

SOCIALISTS CALL FOR ASSESSMENT OF DIGITAL EDUCATION

The opposition Socialists have called on the government to prepare and submit to parliament an assessment of the experiences of digital education during the coronavirus pandemic, insisting that some 20% of children had had limited or no access to digital education.

István Hiller, the head of the party board, told an online press conference that smaller children learning basic skills had suffered most from the difficulties associated with digital education, and called for extra support for that age group and their teachers.

Hiller said the opposition, once winning the election next spring, would raise the age limit for mandatory education to 18 years. Since the incumbent government reduced it to 16 years, some 80,000 students have dropped out of school, he said. "They are the future fostered workers," he said.

Should they come to power, the opposition will also tie the wages of teachers to the minimum wage to ensure regular raises, and introduce a 20,000 forint (EUR 57) school-starting allowance for families each September, the Socialist politician said.

Hiller also slammed the government's decision to award plus points at university admissions for volunteer army service, adding that the opposition would return to reserving those points for academic achievement and social issues.

WAGE GROWTH SLOWS TO 3.5% IN JUNE

Year-on-year wage growth in Hungary slowed to 3.5% in June from 8.2% in the previous month, falling under the rate of inflation, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. The data for businesses and institutions with at least five people on payroll show the average gross monthly wage for full-time employees stood at 436,300 forints (EUR 1,300). The average net wage was 290,200 forints. The gross median wage was 350,000 forints. Calculating with a 5.3% CPI, real wages declined by 1.7% in June. Excluding the 85,800 Hungarians working full time in fostered work programmes -- who earned on average a gross 84,500 forints in June -- the average gross monthly wage in Hungary was 447,300 forints. The average gross wage in the business sector, which includes state-owned companies, rose by 6.3% to 446,400 forints, excluding fostered workers. The average gross wage in the public sector, excluding fostered workers, fell by 4.2% to 456,800 forints, showing the impact of the healthcare workers' bonus in the base period. People working in the ICT sector were the highest earners in June, getting gross monthly 720,900 forints on average. People working in commercial accommodations and catering earned the least, 264,300 forints.

A broader set of data covering all full-time employees, not only the

ones at employers with a payroll of five or more, show the average gross wage stood at 423,600 forints and the average net wage at 281,700 forints in June. The median gross wage was 335,800 forints. Excluding fostered workers, full-timers earned a gross monthly 433,500 forints and net 288,300 forints. Data for January-June show men earned, on average, 19.4% more than women during the period.

Takarékbank chief analyst András Horváth noted that wage growth cleared of the effects of bonuses and one-offs reached 7.7% in June, practically level with the 7.8% of the previous month. Wages are continuing to climb as employers try to keep their staff and attract new workers, he added. Takarékbank puts full-year wage growth at 9%. K&H Bank senior analyst Dávid Németh said higher employment and an apparent labour squeeze in some sectors of the economy augur continued wage growth in the future.

INVESTMENT VOLUME CLIMBS 10.8% IN Q2 FROM LOW BASE

Investment volume in Hungary rose by an annual 10.8% in Q2, albeit from a low pandemic base, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Tuesday. Investments in machinery jumped by 23.9% and construction investments increased by 3.2%. In a quarter-on-quarter

comparison, investment volume rose by a seasonally-adjusted 3.6%. In absolute terms, Q2 investments reached 2,760 billion forints (EUR 7.9bn). Construction investments accounted for about 57% of the total. Private sector investments increased by 13.0% to 1,580 billion forints, while public sector investments inched up 0.2% to 354 billion forints. Manufacturing sector investments rose by 10.7%, construction sector investments jumped by 58.3% and investments in the commercial accommodations and catering sector increased by 19.8%.

Commenting on the data, Finance Minister Mihály Varga said investments were at a record high in Q2, with a 10.8% growth from the same period a year earlier. The government's development-friendly response to the economic fallout of the coronavirus crisis contributed to an uptick in the sector, he said in a Facebook post. The government allocated 4,000 billion forints to supporting investments last year, and will do the same in 2021, he said. Hungary's 27.5% investment rate is one of the best in the European Union, he said.

PHILIP MORRIS INAUGURATES HUF 3 BN E-CIGARETTE RECYCLING CENTRE IN HUNGARY

Tobacco company Philip Morris inaugurated a 3 billion forint (EUR 86m) e-cigarette recycling centre in Gyál, on

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the outskirts of Budapest. Philip Morris Sustainability Director Miguel Coleta said the centre can recycle 150,000 electric tobacco devices a month, but capacity can be increased. The company picked the site because of Hungary's economic stability and the favourable investment environment, he added. State secretary Tamás Menczer said the investment created 100 jobs, noting that Philip Morris has just one other recycling centre, in Japan. Philip Morris's revenue in Hungary was over 230 billion forints last year.

MAGYAR SUZUKI TO SHUT DOWN PRODUCTION FOR TWO WEEKS

The Hungarian unit of Japanese car maker Suzuki is to shut down production for two weeks at its plant in Esztergom (NW of Budapest) due to chip shortages. The plant will shut down between September 6 and 18, the company's communications officer told MTI. The plant will take advantage of the break to implement development tasks included in the annual investment plan, Zsuzsanna Bonnar-Csonka said.

HUN FEDERATION: BUDAPEST MUNICIPALITY HAS NO COMPETENCE IN HOSTING WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPS

As the municipality of Budapest is not a signatory to the agreement on the capital city's hosting the World Athletics Championships in 2023, it has no competence in taking decisions concerning the event, the Hungarian Athletics Federation (MASZ) said. MASZ issued a statement in response to Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony announcing last week that he would propose to the general assembly's meeting this week to withdraw its approval for the city to host the 2023 event. The mayor argued that by passing a law on China's Fudan University, the government had violated a 2019 agreement which included, among other things, Budapest's approval for the world athletics championships.

In its statement, MASZ said that "only a member of the international athletics federation is entitled to submit a bid for hosting a championships".

"Accordingly, it was MASZ that applied for and won the right to

organise the 2023 World Athletics Championships with the support of the Hungarian government," the federation said, adding that the government had guaranteed covering the costs of organisation.

"Since the municipality of Budapest will not participate in organising the 2023 championships, it is not a contracting party, and as such does not have any tasks or any expenses to cover in connection with the event," MASZ said.

GIANT IMAGE BUILT WITH OVER 160,000 LEGO BRICKS AT BUDAPEST UNI

A giant picture has been built with 169,416 LEGO bricks at Budapest's Moholy-Nagy Arts University (MOME) and put on display at its main hall, the university said. It took more than 300 hours for over 100 people to work the colour pop-art picture into a large mosaic, MOME said in a statement. Designed by graphic art student Evu Szabó, the picture symbolises how the arts, design and sciences connect in multiple ways, the university said, adding that the structure weighs 150 kilos. The picture can be viewed by the public until September 7.