

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



Planet Budapest 2021 Expo

MTVA/Szilárd Koszti-csik

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**NATO foreign ministers meet in Riga**

**Events at the Planet Budapest 2021 Expo**

**Plenary session of parliament**

**Stats office releases Q3 GDP, Oct industry price figures**

**Coronavirus updates**

## TOP STORY

### ÁDER CALLS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

The world must take action “globally as well as locally”, President János Áder said at the Planet Budapest 2021 sustainability expo. “Global action can be successful through the deeds of nation states,” he said in his address to the event.

The age-old motto of “think globally, act locally” is no longer enough, Áder said in his address on the second day of the event. It should be changed to “act globally, act locally”, he added. People from 120 countries are at the conference in Budapest over the next few days to discuss climate change, the impending water crisis, measures to protect biodiversity and build a circular economy. On the conference’s agenda are the threats as well as opportunities generated by climate change, the dichotomy of energy security and political stability, financing circular and green economies, water and food safety, rapid technical developments in transport as well as waste management, the president noted. The expo held simultaneously with the conference offers products by 183 Hungarian, Polish, Czech, and Slovak companies in connection with sustainable food production, water management, energy supply, transport, urban development and waste management, Áder noted. The products are aimed at reducing man’s carbon footprint and the energy consumption of buildings and transport emissions, he said.

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## **ÁDER: HUNGARY CLIMATE MEASURES ON PAR WITH MOST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES**

In his address at the Planet Budapest 2021 sustainability expo, President János Áder highlighted Hungary as one of ten European Union countries to have reduced carbon-dioxide emissions by over 30% since 1990. Fully 70% of Hungary's electricity is carbon-emissions free, while the country has doubled its woodlands in the past 100 years, he said. The world's most developed countries "may have similar indicators", he added. Concerning Hungary's contribution to common goals, Áder said the country will shut down its sole remaining coal-based power plant between 2025 and 2030, reducing Hungary's carbon emissions by a further 10%. By 2050, the country will have increased its wooded areas from the current 22% to at least 27%, he said, adding that the capacity of solar plants will have doubled from the current 3,000MW by 2030, while all municipal transport buses will be electric. The government has also set the goal of not leaving any sewage untreated by 2030, he said. The president also noted the recently opened Mura-Dráva-Duna Biosphere Reserve of 1 million hectares, set up in cooperation with 5 neighbouring countries, as well as the introduction of sustainable development as a subject in Hungarian secondary schools.

## **POLISH PRESIDENT: V4 SETTING EXAMPLE FOR EU IN SUSTAINABILITY**

Cooperation in the Visegrad Group is setting an example in sustainability that the European Union should follow, Polish President Andrzej Duda said at the Planet Budapest 2021 sustainability expo and world conference on Tuesday.

Duda said cooperation in regional partnership enabled the participants to successfully cope with current challenges. "Effective efforts for sustainable development made by the V4 countries also inspire others to improve quality of life in society," he added. Duda said he was pleased to see that the V4 countries were on a common platform with ever greater frequency as regards the most important topics. "As the Visegrad Group is celebrating its thirtieth anniversary, there is clear evidence that the V4 is the fastest developing region in the EU, narrowing the gap economically as well as giving impetus to growth and helping European developments return to the right path," he added.

Also, in a video message sent to the same event, Slovak counterpart Zuzana Čaputová talked about the importance of global action. Čaputová said the pandemic was also a reminder of how ecosystems were interlinked and "our actions can upset natural equilibria".

"We are only one month past the Glasgow climate summit and we must

maintain pressure and make efforts to reduce our global climate footprint," she said. "Sustainable development requires global action, which also applies to the largest emitters," she added. Čaputová said the planet and democracy must be protected to ensure long-term sustainable development.

## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: BUDAPEST GLOBAL HUB OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Hungary can be proud of its performance in climate protection, one of the great global challenges besides the coronavirus pandemic and migration, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Tuesday. The Planet Budapest sustainability expo, held in Budapest between November 29 and December 5, is showcasing Hungarian companies offering competitive, world-class tech solutions in environmental protection and water management, he said. On the sidelines of the expo, Szijjártó held talks with the ministers responsible for water management, energy or innovation in several countries.

He concluded an agreement with Sierra Leone on launching a 50 million dollar tied-aid programme, with Hungarian companies investing in water management projects in the country, with a view to improving access to healthy drinking water, he said. The project is in line with the Hungarian government's aim to take help where it is

needed to prevent emigration from the region, he added. Szijjártó also signed a cooperation agreement with the Cuban minister for water management. At the meeting with the Uzbek innovation minister, they wrapped up the first round of a tender for research and development startups. The tender supported nine Uzbek-Hungarian projects with a total of two million euros, he said. The ministers also agreed that both governments would allocate one million euros for a similar project next year. In his talks with the Ecuadorian energy minister, the ministers agreed that Hungarian companies will be given the opportunity to upgrade the infrastructure of universities using nuclear energy and radiology.

## **PARLT ORDERS REFERENDUM ON CHILD PROTECTION LAW**

Parliament on Tuesday voted to hold a referendum concerning Hungary's child protection law. The motion was passed by pro-government lawmakers and several independents, while the opposition boycotted the vote. The public will be asked the following questions in the plebiscite:

Do you support children in public schools participating in classes demonstrating sexual orientations without parental consent?

Do you support information about gender change treatments being given to children?

Do you support media content of a sexual nature and affecting the

development of children being presented to them without any restrictions?

Do you support media content presenting gender change being presented to children?

According to parliament's resolution, the referendum would cost 5.5 billion forints (EUR 15m) if held simultaneously with a general election, rather than 12.6 billion if held separately. Under an amendment to the election law proposed by the opposition and passed on Nov. 9, referendums cannot be held 41 days before or after local, national, or European parliamentary elections. They can, however, be linked to such elections on the same day.

Justice Minister Judit Varga welcomed parliament's decision, and pledged to "protect the rights of Hungarian children and parents, and stop the LGBTQ lobby at the school fence". "Only a common will can stop the violent LGBTQ lobby and pressure of Brussels, which is why the Government has initiated a referendum on child protection," Varga said in a bilingual Facebook post.

## **ORBÁN CONGRATULATES NEW CZECH PM**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has congratulated Czech counterpart Petr Fiala on becoming prime minister, the PM's press chief said on Tuesday.

"We regard the Czech Republic as a friend and strategic partner," Orbán said in his letter, adding that the challenges of recent years, such

as the pandemic and the increasing pressure of migration, highlighted the importance of close cooperation between eastern European countries. Orbán said that hopefully he and Fiala would further strengthen already excellent bilateral ties and expand comprehensive cooperation as part of the Visegrad Group.

Orbán assured Fiala that Hungary's government was ready to work together towards building a stronger Europe based on strong member states, giving priority to stability, competitiveness and respect for values based on Christian traditions.

## **NOVÁK: HUNGARY SEEKS TO BUILD POST-BREXIT TIES WITH UK**

It is in Hungary's fundamental interests to further develop ties with Great Britain after Brexit, "not only at governmental level but in the area of party politics, too", Hungary's minister for family affairs said in London late on Monday. Katalin Novák spoke after talks with Jacob Rees-Mogg, leader of the House of Commons, and told Hungarian public media that the government sought opportunities for cooperation with Britain's Conservatives and Hungary's ruling Fidesz party. She said the two parties' similar views on family policy offered such opportunities. Rees-Mogg was interested to hear how Hungary had reduced abortions by 41% in the past decade, and he welcomed the doubling in the number of marriages

in Hungary as well as the birth rate increasing by 27%, Novák said, adding that these trends were “just the opposite” in Britain.

Concerning Brexit, Novák said that the European Union’s institutions “have failed to draw inevitable consequences” and would make “the same mistakes again” by “dragging Poland or Hungary around with no regard to national characteristics”. Just as Britons refused to give up their national identity or traditions, neither would Hungarians or Poles, Novák said. “It’s important that the EU and its institutions should be partners in endeavours to preserve our sovereignty,” she added. Novák said negotiations between the British and Hungarian governments were ongoing to ensure that Hungarian ventures and students in Britain suffer the least because of Brexit. She said the costs borne by students had grown and Hungarian business people and students no longer had “the same rights” as before Britain quit the EU.

### **SZIJJÁRTÓ CALLS FOR ‘DIALOGUE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST’**

The problems between East and West should be resolved through dialogue, a “new cold war” is against Hungary’s interests, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Riga on Tuesday. Speaking ahead of a meeting of NATO foreign ministers, Szijjártó said that lack of dialogue and conflict always resulted in “dangerous situations for

central Europe”. Hungary has always supported opening new channels of communication between the East and West in the European Union and NATO, he said. “Russia must be handled as a reality in the region. It is important that everyone realises that Europe, especially central Europe, has to cooperate with Moscow on certain issues,” he said, citing energy supply as an example. Lack of cooperation in the sector would lead to “a serious situation”, he said. Regarding countries that “see Russia as a threat, for historical or geographical reasons”, Szijjártó noted that Hungary has contributed to the protection of the airspace of the Baltic states in two NATO missions, and will do so again next year. Hungary sees those countries as allies, Szijjártó said.

### **HUNGARY RECORDS 6,390 NEW CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS, 195 DEATHS**

Altogether 195 patients died of a Covid-related illness over the past 24 hours, while 6,390 new coronavirus infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Tuesday. So far 6,126,420 people have received a first jab, while 5,842,885 have been fully vaccinated. Altogether 2,515,398 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections stands at 185,928, while hospitals are treating 7,596 Covid-19 patients, 513 of whom need respiratory assistance. Since the first outbreak, 1,103,108 infections have been registered, while the number

of fatalities has risen to 34,521. Fully 882,659 people have made a recovery. There are 49,607 people in official quarantine, while the number of tests taken stands at 8,443,744.

### **MORE SOLDIERS ASSIGNED TO HELP OUT AT HOSPITALS**

The Hungarian Armed Forces is assigning more soldiers to help out staff at Hungary’s hospitals during the prolonged national vaccination campaign, the defence ministry said on Monday. More than 60 additional soldiers are being assigned to hospitals and health-care institutions to assist the Covid response efforts and take the burden off health-care staff, the ministry said in a statement. This means there are now some 870 soldiers supporting the health-care system at 95 locations, it said. The soldiers assigned to the hospitals help out with logistical tasks, temperature screenings, directing patients to the right place as well as with administrative and transportation tasks.

### **OPPOSITION TO FILE COMPLAINT ABOUT HOUSE SPEAKER’S REMARKS**

Hungary’s opposition alliance is filing a criminal complaint concerning Speaker of Parliament László Kövér’s recently leaked remarks made a year and half ago before secret services leaders,

Párbeszéd group leader Tímea Szabó said on Tuesday. Szabó told a press conference that the government had demonstrated in recent weeks that it was incapable of refraining from illegal methods to maintain “corrupt... fraudulent power”. First it was revealed that the government had purchased the Pegasus software to spy on opposition politicians, independent journalists and economic players, and then Kövér’s speech was leaked in which he “encouraged secret service leaders to violate the law and spy on opposition lawmakers, basically up-ending law and order,” she said. Szabó said a report would be filed to the Central Chief Prosecution Office of Investigation concerning secret information gathering and the unauthorised use of concealed methods. Socialist lawmaker Ildikó Borbély Bangó said the house speaker had crossed a line that no politician or public dignitary was allowed to. DK deputy group leader Gergely Arató said Kövér’s remarks clearly showed ruling Fidesz’s way of thinking. “The country [they think] belongs to them and the others, who think differently are enemies”.

### **SOCIALISTS WARN OF GROWING POVERTY AMONG PENSIONERS**

The gap between pensions and wages is growing, and a growing number of Hungarian pensioners are experiencing poverty, the Socialist head of parliament’s welfare

committee said. Lajos Korózs told an online press conference that at the end of 2019, as many as 270,000 pensioners were among the poorest ten percent of Hungarians, going up from 26,000 in 2010. Pensions are “polarised”, and the system has become “rigid” so very few can choose early retirement, he said. While 11.2% of GDP was spent on elderly care in 2010, that ratio fell to 8.3% by 2019, he said. Meanwhile, “there is plenty of money for prestige investments,” he added. Should the opposition come to power at next spring’s general election, the Socialists would ensure a more flexible retirement system and launch a pension correction scheme, he said.

### **HUNGARY MARKS 25 YEARS AS OECD MEMBER**

Hungary celebrated the 25th anniversary of its accession to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) at an event in Budapest on Tuesday. Speaking at the event, Finance Minister Mihály Varga said the OECD offered “genuine assistance” by making recommendations to support economic development “that take into consideration member countries’ interests and are shaped with fact-based analysis”.

This is “especially important” as Hungary has frequently been the target of “subjective, politically motivated” criticism from the European Union, he added. Varga called the recent international agreement on

a global minimum corporate tax “an OECD success”, adding that the deal was reached after negotiations “based on mutual respect”. OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann called Hungary’s economic development since the country’s OECD accession “a success story”. He said Hungary’s rate of economic growth is among the fastest among OECD members and highlighted the country’s “especially low” jobless rate and high rate of employment.

### **AGRICULTURE MINISTER: HUNGARY ON RIGHT PATH TO FOOD SECURITY**

The importance of food security and food sovereignty has grown considerably as a result of pandemic, and Hungary is on the right track in these areas, Minister of Agriculture István Nagy said at the Planet Budapest 2021 sustainability expo and world conference on Tuesday. The pandemic has strengthened certain trends globally and in Hungary, such as digitalisation, e-commerce, and the importance of locally produced food and short supply chains, he said. The agriculture ministry and the Hungarian government have made significant efforts in the past ten years to meet sustainability targets, he said.

“The pandemic has encouraged everyone to speed up these efforts, and given it is a common problem, common solutions must be worked out together,” he added. The ministry has launched a dialogue with other

ministries, involving players in the food chain, research institutes, universities and civil organisation, too, on preparing a national schedule aimed at achieving sustainability in food systems, he said.

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## **HUNGARY WAGES GROW 9.1% IN SEPT**

Hungarian wages grew by an annual 9.1% in September, up from 8.9% in the previous month, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Tuesday.

The gross monthly wage for full-time employees averaged 428,100 forints (EUR 1,165), according to data on businesses and institutions with at least five people on the payroll. The average net wage was 284,700 forints. The gross median wage was 349,300 forints. With annual inflation of 5.5% in September, real wages increased by 3.4%. Wage inflation will remain high with next year's increases and benefits, analysts told MTI, warning of broader associated inflation risks. András Horváth of Takarékbank noted that employers were still having to raise wages to retain and attract labour. He added that often wages

may rise by as much as 20-25% in a single year. The average wage rise may be in the double digits next year, he said. Péter Virovác of ING Bank said the structure of wage growth had become slightly more balanced with regard to the public and business sectors. Wage hikes were higher in the public sector, but the business sector also saw greater upward pressure compared with August, he said. Virovác noted increases in the minimum wages approaching 20% coupled with tax relief. At the same time, businesses face big cost increases in areas such as energy, transport and procurement. Also, labour shortages could increase labour costs even more than expected. The ING analyst pointed to a serious risk that large price increases may occur at the start of the year both in terms of products and services.

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## **CBANK RAISES O/N DEPO, COLLATERALISED LOAN RATES**

Hungary's central bank policymakers raised the O/N deposit rate by 45 basis points to 1.60% and the O/N

and one-week collateralised loan rates by 105 basis points to 4.10% at a meeting on Tuesday. The base rate remains unchanged at 2.10%. The O/N deposit rate and the collateralised loan rate mark the bottom and the top, respectively, of the central bank's "interest rate corridor". The base rate is paid on mandatory reserves and preferential deposits.

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## **CSONTVÁRY PAINTING SETS RECORD STARTING PRICE FOR A HUNGARIAN WORK AT AUCTION**

Tivadar Csontváry Kosztká's "Secret Island", one of only a dozen or so privately owned paintings by the Hungarian master, is soon to be auctioned, and the enigmatic work has set a record starting price for a Hungarian painting at auction. Budapest art trader Virág Judit Gallery has set the starting price for Csontváry's (1853-1919) work in the December 19 sale at 160 million forints (EUR 440,000). The painting dating from 1903 is one of Csontváry's "most enigmatic" works, art historian Anna Kelen told a press conference on Tuesday.