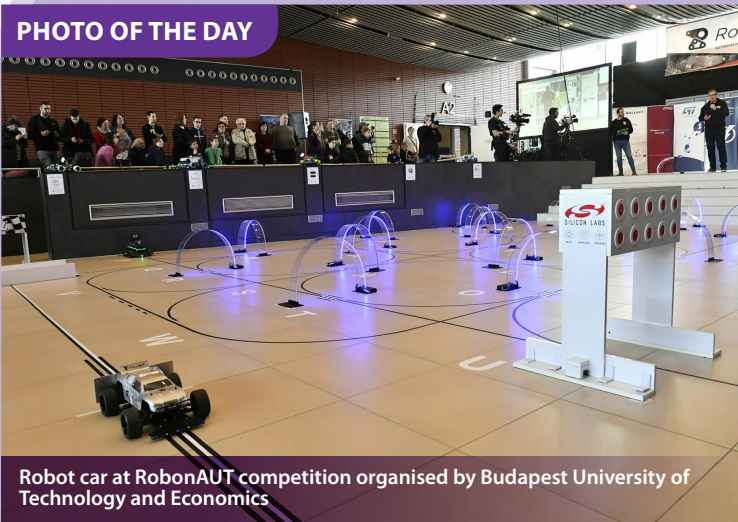


PHOTO OF THE DAY



Robot car at RobonAUT competition organised by Budapest University of Technology and Economics

UPCOMING EVENTS

Speaker László Kover to meet Kyrgyzstan counterpart Nurlanbek Shakiev

National Marriage Week takes place from Feb 11 to 18

Events related to the wars in Ukraine and Israel

TOP STORY

'MISTAKES HAVE CONSEQUENCES'

On the right, mistakes have consequences, the Fidesz parliamentary group leader, told public radio in connection with Katalin Novák, who has proffered her resignation.

Máté Kocsis referred to a "rare political situation", and he said Novák had made a responsible decision to resign and admit her mistake in connection with her pardon of the deputy director of a children's home who had been convicted for helping to cover up child abuse. He said in the interview that Novák's resignation had been "a straightforward decision", and he also noted that Judit Varga, who led the Fidesz list for the upcoming EP election, had also taken responsibility for her part in the pardon, when she countersigned it during her time as minister of justice.

The Fidesz politician said the left wing, however, had been mired in "a thousand and one scandals" in the recent past but had failed to take responsibility. He said the leader of the Democratic Coalition, Ferenc Gyurcsány, "should never have returned to politics under any circumstances".

Kocsis noted that following Novák's decision, several parties proposed electing the head of state directly. This, he added, had not occurred to the Democratic Coalition or the Socialist Party when their representatives were in government.

KOCSIS: NEW HEAD OF STATE LIKELY TO BE INSTALLED IN MARCH

If Katalin Novák were to sign her resignation on Sunday, MPs would have to decide within fifteen days whether to accept it or not, adding that this decision could be taken on Feb 26, the first day of the spring session, the parliamentary group leader of Fidesz said. Máté Kocsis said that were parliament to accept her resignation -- which he said he had no serious doubt they would do -- then the new head of state must be elected within thirty days, so Hungary would have a new president in March.

Meanwhile, the Fidesz group leader said Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's proposal to change the constitution with a view obviating the right to a presidential pardon in cases involving child abuse was "a child protection measure". Kocsis said it was strange that the left wing was vehement in wanting the head of state gone, but had failed to vote for any child protection amendments previously. Nevertheless, he said it was likely that the left wing would now vote for Orbán's amendment, "though I wouldn't rule out the opposite either". Also, the second package of the child protection law will be submitted to lawmakers in the spring, he noted.

VARGA RESIGNS FROM ALL HER POSITIONS

Former justice minister Judit Varga said on Saturday that she is retiring from public life, resigning from her mandate as an MP and from her position leading the EP list of the governing Fidesz-Christian-Democrat alliance. Varga announced her decision on her Facebook page in response to the resignation of President Katalin Novák. Varga said that since the change in political system, the validity of the president's individual pardon decisions had required the countersignature of the justice minister. "I continued the more than 25-year-old practice of the justice minister in acknowledging the president's clemency decision," she said, adding that she assumed political responsibility for countersigning the president's decision.

DOBREV: 'LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE ON THE NEXT PRESIDENT'

Opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) MEP Klára Dobrev has said that DK will start collecting signatures in support of a proposal that voters should directly decide who should be the next president of the republic. Dobrev said in her Facebook post that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán decided who the previous three presidents of Hungary were, "and we all know how that turned out". First he chose a head of state who "plagiarised half of their

doctorate thesis", then he opted for "a signature machine bereft of their own opinion", and finally he selected someone who granted a presidential pardon to the assistant of a paedophile criminal, the opposition politician said.

Dobrev said that if Orbán were to choose again, then an "unworthy party soldier" would become Hungary's next president. DK, she added, would propose that, like is most other European countries, the people should directly elect the head of state. DK will soon start collecting signatures at street booths and online in support of their proposal, she said.

PÁRBEZSÉD CALLS FOR JOINT OPPOSITION PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

The opposition Párbeszéd-Greens party is inviting the leaders of the "pro-republic" opposition parties to meet to discuss a potential joint presidential candidate, party spokesperson Richard Barabas said on Sunday. Barabas told an online press briefing that whereas his party had proposals for the candidate, what was more important at this stage was to show "strength" and a "way forward for the country mired in a moral crisis" by taking a joint stand. The task of "the pro-republic opposition", he said, was to show an alternative to the "corrupt system", and "a political path based on truth, solidarity and caring for each other". Barabas noted that his party had called on President Katalin Novák to resign, adding they were glad that

she had done. "Prime Minister Viktor Orbán now could not hide behind the skirts of his former allies," he added. Barabas said the Párbeszéd-Greens party continued to support the idea of electing the president directly as it was important that the "institution regain its credibility".

DONÁTH: 'GOVT DOESN'T CARE ABOUT CHILDREN'

The government "doesn't really care about children", Anna Donáth, the leader of the opposition Momentum Movement, told protesters gathered in front of the presidential Sandor Palace in Budapest on Saturday, adding that "for them the family is just an empty phrase". Donáth said society needed "strong female role models, but not like Katalin Novák," who, she added, was resigning as head of state "but not for reasons of conscience". The Momentum politician said Novák "should have apologised to the children abused in Bicske". She also said the government only saw people as voters, adding that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán also bore responsibility for the developments surrounding the case.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: MPS MAY RATIFY SWEDEN'S NATO ACCESSION AT END-FEB

Hungary's parliament may vote on Sweden's NATO accession by the end of February if Sweden's prime minister paid a visit to Hungary first,

Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said in Boston on Friday. "I met my Swedish counterpart on numerous occasions ... and I told him: do something to rebuild the trust. Otherwise we can't guarantee anything," Szijjártó said during a panel discussion. "What we could guarantee we have done. We have put the issue on the agenda of parliament with the very clear signal that the government supports ratification." He said both the Swedish premier and foreign minister had visited Türkiye before Turkish MPs ratified its accession. "We just asked them do so with Hungary as well," he said, adding that there was "a good chance" that ratification could take place on Feb 26 and 27, when Hungarian lawmakers reconvene for the spring session. "But this invitation should be accepted by the Swedish prime minister," he said.

KARÁCSONY LAUNCHES RE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Gergely Karácsony, the mayor of Budapest who also leads a leftist opposition party, launched his re-election campaign on Saturday, declaring that he stood for a more European, greener city which stood for greater solidarity, values which were associated with a republican form of governance. Unveiling his campaign slogan "We're giving Budapest a future", Karácsony said at the event that a republican alliance meant "treating each other well and forming a community". The mayor added that

the institutions and the idea of the republic had been stripped from the constitution 14 years ago, "so it's vital that Budapest remains a republic". Referring to the election in 120 days' time, he said the ruling Fidesz party neither had a candidate for mayor nor a manifesto for the capital. Instead, Fidesz had issued a "declaration of war", he insisted. The mayor also said he would reach out to the green LMP party on the possibility of running together in the local municipal elections.

Karácsony said the life of the average Budapest resident was five years shorter than that of residents of other large European cities, and he appealed to voters to trust another five years to him in office so he could press ahead with policies that would extend their life expectancy by five years in a decade or two. He referred to his administration's approach to public areas, saying aspects such as shade, noise reduction, air quality and amenities like benches were important aspects of policymaking. He said that his administration planned a "Budapest climate agency" with EU financing to promote environmentally sound investments. The mayor also noted a metropolitan council scheme using 20 billion forints of EU money to replace lead pipes and renew public drinking fountains.

Karácsony said that whereas he was proud of the past four-and-a-half years of his administration, he nevertheless felt that the "glass was half empty" since they had implemented projects

that had been long overdue, such as the renovation of Chain Bridge and Blaha Lujza Square. "Only now can we turn to talk of the future," he added.

FARMERS PROTEST 'UNLIMITED UKRAINIAN IMPORTS'

Some 1,000 farmers protested on Friday near the Hungary-Ukraine border crossing at Záhony against the European Commission's proposal to extend the unlimited imports of Ukrainian agricultural products by one year. The protesters lined up hundreds of tractors and trucks along a 5km section of the road leading to the border station on both lanes blocking regular traffic. They put Hungarian flags on their vehicles and held up at the Záhony crossing banners with slogans criticising Brussels and the EC and expressing support for Hungarian agriculture.

István Jakab, the head of farmers' association Magosz, said that "incompetent people" in Brussels were destroying Europe's agricultural sector and the European people. He noted a similar demonstration staged against EU regulations by Hungarian

farmers last September to protect the 5 million hectares of the country's arable land. Jakab said European farmers could not compete with Ukraine's large producers and their off-shore registered foreign owners and investors "who want to put their hands on large sizes of arable land in Ukraine with Brussels' help". "And they want to first weaken and finally put their hands on the European market," he added.

POPE FRANCIS NAMES KARIKÓ AS MEMBER OF PONTIFICAL ACADEMY FOR LIFE

Pope Francis has appointed Nobel Laureate Katalin Karikó as an ordinary member of the Pontifical Academy for Life (Pontificia Accademia per la Vita), the Holy See Press Office said. The announcement noted that Katalin Karikó's scientific research led to the development of the mRNA-based vaccine against Covid-19, for which she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2023. The Pontifical Academy for Life was founded in 1994 and deals with bioethical issues, the focus of which

is the protection of life. The academy consists of a maximum of seventy members, who are appointed by the Pope for five years.

HEAT RECORDS BROKEN ON SATURDAY

Unusually mild weather continued on Saturday, with several new heat records broken yet again, HungaroMet said on its website. A daytime maximum of 20.2 degrees Celsius was measured outside Szeged, in southern Hungary, a degree higher than the last record for this day recorded in Ásotthalom in 1958. Meanwhile the dawn temperature was also broken, with 12.8 C recorded in Kiskunmajsza, also in southern Hungary, almost 5 C more than the daily minimum temperature measured in 2020 in Babócsa, in the south-west.

In the capital's Újpest district, 18.4 C was measured on Saturday, which is more than 2 C higher than the record daily high of 16.3 C recorded in Lágymányos in 2020. In Ferihegy and Pestszentlőrinc, the minimum temperature was 9.9 C, beating the previous record of 7 C measured at Budapest's Országút station in 1966.