

TEACHERS PREPARE FOR STRIKE DURING EXAMS

The schedule of exams this year is more complicated than usual because there will be two exams ending the same stage of education instead of one: on April 10-12 students of junior high school will take the tests and on April 15-17 turn will come for their younger colleagues who graduate from primary school after 8 years of learning. The already difficult situation may be considerably complicated by the strike of teachers who have fought for a **pay rise** for several months. Until now negotiations with the Ministry of Education led to a promise of 16% increase of salaries but teachers are not happy with this and want PLN 1,000. A big group of them believe their most powerful negotiating tool is the threat of strike during the exams. Sławomir Broniarz, the head of ZNP (a union of teachers), wants the strike to start on April 8, 2019 and last until it brings the desired effect. In an appeal to parents ZNP says the strike is not against children — teachers are protesting because they do not want to change their jobs, they care about kids' education.

POWER CUTS IN VENEZUELA

The situation in Venezuela, potentially the richest country in the world thanks to its huge oil resources, can hardly get worse. Yet recently it did. In the evening of Thursday, March 7 the country experienced a major **blackout** affecting the capital city, Caracas, as well as 22 out of 23 states. Venezuela produces most of its energy in **hydroelectric plants** and it is a problem in the biggest of them that is responsible for the power cut. Lack of energy has very serious consequences: there are **shortages** of water, gas, public transport does not work. As of Monday a minimum of 17 patients have died because the equipment in hospitals did not work. The president, Nicolas Maduro, declared Friday and the following Monday work-free. Public institutions, schools, companies all remain closed. Maduro claims the situation is a **sabotage** of opposition but in the past smaller blackouts happened in the country regularly due to **mismanagement** of facilities and lack of investment.

SUNDAY SHOPPING BAN GENERATES LOSSES

Since the beginning of 2019 the Sunday shopping ban was extended from 2 to 3 Sundays a month. In 2020 the restrictions will be even more severe and shops will be closed on all Sundays apart from the period before Christmas and Easter. According to the calculations of PKO BP based on transactions with payment cards, the ban has a negative effect on the economy generating losses of about 1.1% of **GDP**. This is a substantial difference that translates, for instance, into the cost of all five new social programmes which the government of Law and Justice recently presented. The same PKO BP report points out Poles are ever more willing to pay electronically, which may be the result of a big number of small shops that recently installed payment terminals. Poles have mixed feelings about the Sunday shopping ban as only 19% of them declare they effectively spend more time with family. The government begins to hear the complaints and is considering a modification to the bill — so far, it is not known what sort of one.

STEVE KERR BEGS TO DIFFER

On Sunday, 10 March 2019, during a loss to Phoenix Suns, Golden State Warriors coach and 6-time NBA champion as a player Steve Kerr was caught on camera (and witnessed by hundreds of thousands of Americans watching the game live on TV) saying the following words to one of his assistant coaches about one of his star players: "I am [expletive] sick of Draymond's sh--- [another expletive]." Kerr, a master at handling the **inquisitive** media in effective, honest and entertaining way, when asked if those were indeed the words he uttered, replied: "No, the **lip-readers** were wrong. What I said was *I beg to differ with Draymond's approach tonight.*" He also added (yet again to the delight of the reporters) that from now on he is planning to laminate all his plays and — instead of communicating verbally with his team — will show his players the laminated pages to escape the dangers of the omnipresent cameras and microphones. Kerr is known for his outspoken political views (he declined invitation to the current White House after winning NBA championship as coach last year), as well as for building the most successful professional basketball team of the past decade. He also still holds the record for the highest career three-point percentage (45.4%) in NBA history for any player with at least 250 three-pointers made.



FOR&AGAINST

- 1 Only teachers who don't care about their students will strike during exams.
- 2 Electricity shortage poses a bigger threat to society than most natural disasters.
- 3 Sunday shopping ban has more pluses than minuses.
- 4 The awareness of the possibility of being recorded makes people behave better than they normally would.

VOCABULARY:

pay rise - podwyżka (wynagrodzenia)
blackout - przerwa w dostawie energii elektrycznej
hydroelectric plant - elektrownia wodna
shortage - brak, niedobór czegoś
sabotage - sabotaż
mismanagement - złe zarządzanie
GDP - PKB
inquisitive - ciekawski, dociekliwy
to beg to differ - pozwalać sobie mieć odmienne zdanie
lip-reading - czytanie z ust

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. When do Polish teachers want to go on strike?
2. How big a pay rise are Polish teacher fighting for?
3. According to president Maduro, what was the cause of blackout in Venezuela?
4. How does Venezuela produce most of its power?
5. What effect did Sunday shopping bank have on Polish economy?
6. Did Steve Kerr curse on live TV last weekend?

SOURCES BOX

polskieradio23.pl, an article from March 11, 2019 about the blackout in Venezuela
finanse.wp.pl, an article from March 9, 2019 about Sunday shopping ban
espn.com, an article about Steve Kerr using bad language on TV