

TEACHERS ON STRIKE

Although many hoped teachers' strike during the national junior high school and 8th grade exams would not happen, the government did not manage to hammer out a deal with two biggest unions before April 8. As a result teachers started a protest for indefinite amount of time, i.e. until they are offered conditions which they accept. They demand PLN 1,000 of pay rise and the government says it cannot find some PLN 6-8 billion to finance such big increase of salaries. ZNP led by Sławomir Broniarz claims 70-80% of schools joined the protest **whereas** the Ministry of Education says only 50% did. Just before the exams the Ministry managed to introduce an **amendment** to the regulations, which allowed for people who have pedagogical training to be members of exam commissions. Thanks to this the junior high school exam on Wednesday and Thursday did take place as planned in the vast majority of schools. Even though this puts teachers in less favourable negotiating position they have another idea: until April 12 (Friday) all high school students must have their final marks inserted into their registers if they are to sit matura exams. Since this cannot be done by any other social group it may be matura exams that will be blocked instead of the other two.

WORLD'S FIRST RURAL SKYSCRAPER

Bestseller, a fashion giant, has recently announced plans to build their new headquarters. Bestseller Tower will become the tallest **skyscraper** in western Europe measuring exactly 320 metres, 10 metres taller than London's The Shard. That information alone is impressive. Yet the location is jaw-dropping. The tower will be erected in Brande, a town in Denmark that has just 7,000 inhabitants. Given the scale of the building they could easily all live inside it when it is opened. Bestseller says the building "will become a landmark" and put the town of Brande on the map. And they are probably right since Brande is not only a town of modest size but it is also located in a **rural**, flat area where the building will be visible from 60 km away. The company got a green light from the city council, but the concept is met with mixed reactions. Its critics say it will destroy the regions's peaceful atmosphere. Before you decide which side you support bear in mind that the project was first presented on April 1 so you had better wait for some more detailed information released on a different date.

A HEALTHIER RELATIONSHIP

It is year 2013. A young, gifted clarinetist Eric Abramovitz decides to leave his native Canada (and his then-girlfriend Jennifer Lee, a flute player herself) and study under the legendary Yehuda Gilad at the world-class Colburn **Conservatory** of Music in LA. He completes a live **audition** in February 2014, flies back home and awaits news from Colburn. It comes weeks later in an email from Prof. Gilad and it isn't good: **regrettably**, he hadn't been accepted. Jennifer - as any decent girlfriend would - offers Eric a shoulder to cry on. Two years later, having overcome a nervous breakdown, Eric applies again and meets his master, this time at the U. of South California, where Gilad also teaches. The professor is surprised and asks him why he had declined his **scholarship** offer earlier. At that point Eric is confused, starts investigating and to his horror finds that Colburn never rejected him. Lee created a fake gmail account and wrote the rejection letter herself in order to keep her boyfriend by her side in Canada. Less than a year ago court awarded Abramowitz USD 260,000 in damages from Lee for "career interference" and "betrayal of trust". Abramowitz (now with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and a new girlfriend) calls his current relationship "a healthier one."

THE STUDENT BEHIND THE BLACK HOLE IMAGE

It was difficult to go through Wednesday, 10 April 2019, without seeing (either on the internet or on TV) the first-ever image of a black hole. Black holes are defined as bodies of **matter** with such intense gravity that not even light can escape it. Michelle Lou of CNN cites the technical difficulty of producing an image of one to be comparable with trying to take a photograph of an orange sitting on the moon using a smartphone. National Science Foundation (a US govt. agency) announced that its international team made it possible by combining the power of eight different radio telescopes to form a virtual telescope the size of Earth itself. But even then analysing its "sparse and noisy data" took over 2 years and wouldn't have been possible without a series of algorithms, one of which was devised three years ago by a young MIT computer sciences graduate student Katie Bouman. Katie's algorithm helped to patch the image together where some of the data was missing, in line with the concept that - in any photograph - if you know how a particular pixel looks like, you can make an **educated guess** on how the one next to it probably looks like (without seeing it). There were several other algorithms that helped analyse the data and they all gave the same result (the image you see everywhere now). In Bouman's own words: "No matter what we did, you would have to **bend over backwards** crazy to get something that wasn't this ring."



FOR&AGAINST

- 1 Education will change for the better when teachers get a pay rise.
- 2 Serious news outlets should not publish fake articles on April 1.
- 3 Relationship logistics should never stand in a way of any promising career.
- 4 Advanced physics and astronomy are of no actual use to ordinary people who don't understand it.

VOCABULARY:

whereas - podczas gdy
amendment - poprawka
skyscraper - wieżowiec
rural - wiejski
conservatory - wyższa szkoła muzyczna
audition - przesłuchanie
regrettably - niestety
scholarship - stypendium
matter - materia
educated guess - wybór dokonany na podstawie posiadanej wiedzy
to bend over backwards - stawać na głowie (bardzo się starać)

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Did teachers' protest stop junior high school students from writing their exams?
2. How do some teachers plan to block matura exams?
3. How tall will be the Bestseller Tower?
4. Why can't the story of Bestseller Tower be fully trusted?
5. Is Jennifer Lee still with Eric Abramowitz?
6. Which organisation commissioned the project of creating the photographic image of a black hole?

SOURCES BOX

tvn24.pl, TVN News in English programme from April 8, 2019, material about teachers' strike
independent.co.uk, an article from April 1, 2019 about Bestseller Tower
washingtonpost.com, a June 15 2018 article on a nearly derailed career of Eric Abramowitz
cnn.com, an April 11 2019 article on a student who made the NSF black hole project possible