

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



Masked passer-by in Budapest with the inscription: "Stay Home"

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Coronavirus updates**

**European Council holds extraordinary conference call**

**Foreign Minister Szijjártó holds conference call with Czech, Slovak, Austrian counterparts**

## TOP STORY

# ORBÁN: HUNGARY CLOSES BORDERS TO FOREIGNERS

The prime minister announced further restrictive measures to contain the coronavirus epidemic including a ban for foreign passengers to enter Hungary.

Speaking in parliament, Viktor Orbán said that only Hungarian citizens will be allowed to enter the country. International coordination talks on the border restriction are under way, he said. All events in Hungary will be banned starting at midnight on Monday, Orbán said, adding that sporting events should be held behind closed doors unless the organisers cancel those events altogether.

Pubs, cinemas and other cultural facilities will also be closed. Restaurants, cafés and shops will be allowed to remain open until 3pm, Orbán said, adding that the restriction will not apply to food stores, pharmacies or drug stores.

Orbán has called on people to postpone all gatherings except for family events, and warned that the elderly were exceptionally vulnerable to the new virus.

"We're looking at hard times ahead, much harder than what we've had up till now," Orbán said. "We don't have much knowledge [about what's to come] but what we do have is rather alarming," he said, pointing out that in Austria, the number of coronavirus cases went from 30 to 500 in a matter of eight days.

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## **ORBÁN: EPIDEMIC REQUIRES REWRITE OF FISCAL, ECONOMIC POLICY**

The new coronavirus epidemic will require a rewrite of fiscal and economic policy, the prime minister said in parliament. The budget will have to be redrafted "at all levels", a task that will be coordinated by Finance Minister Mihály Varga, Viktor Orbán said. The governor of Hungary's central bank has also become involved in the matter, he said. Orbán stressed the necessity of measures to protect workplaces and said talks would start with representatives of the sectors hardest hit by the virus, namely tourism and catering, in order to determine courses of action.

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## **ORBÁN: GOVT TO FAVOUR STIMULUS OVER AUSTERITY IN MANAGING VIRUS'S ECONOMIC IMPACT**

Hungary's government will favour fiscal stimulus over austerity measures in managing the impact of the outbreak of the new coronavirus, the prime minister said in parliament. "We need measures that help keep people in work," Viktor Orbán said in response to remarks from the opposition parties.

He said employers and employees would need to devote enormous efforts to saving jobs in the coming period. "Seeing a spike in unemployment would not be an extraordinary situation for them," he

said, noting that the unemployment rate was currently at 3%.

He also said the country's medical students were barred from leaving the country and asked to remain on standby, as they, too, are considered part of the health-care workforce. On the subject of protective equipment, Orbán said they would primarily be supplied to health-care workers, pointing out that 4% of nurses in China and 10% in Italy had been infected with the virus.

As regards the situation around schools, he said the reason they had not been closed was to ensure that students whose parents could not stay home with them had a place to go. Concerning the extent of testing for coronavirus, the prime minister said it was "physically impossible" to screen people for the virus before a certain point, arguing that the test results are only 50-70% accurate before the body's antibody response kicks in.

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## **OFFICIAL: GOVT NOT CLOSING BUDAPEST AIRPORT**

Though Hungary's government has decided to close the country's borders in an effort to contain the spread of the new coronavirus, Budapest's Liszt Ferenc International Airport will not be closed, a government official said. This means that only Hungarian citizens will be allowed to enter the country, Zoltán Kovács, the state secretary for international communications and relations, told MTI.

Transit and freight traffic will continue as is, Kovács said, underlining that passengers would be able to board connecting flights at the airport.

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## **HUNGARY CASE COUNT 39**

The number of people in Hungary testing positive for the new coronavirus has increased to 39, [koronavirus.gov.hu](http://koronavirus.gov.hu) reported on Monday morning. So far, 29 Hungarians, 9 Iranians and one British citizen have been quarantined with a confirmed case of coronavirus and one man has died, the website said. A total of 1,436 tests have been conducted in Hungary, while 159 people are currently in isolation. A search for possible contacts of the new cases is under way.

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## **CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER: EPIDEMIC ENTERS NEW STAGE**

The outbreak of the new coronavirus in Hungary has entered its next stage, going from isolated cases to clusters, chief medical officer Cecília Müller said.

The cases identified in the country so far were either individual ones or within smaller communities, she told a press conference after a meeting of the operative board coordinating the epidemic response. But in the coming days the epidemic is expected to appear in clusters, she said, adding that at this stage it would be impossible to trace infections. Müller advised those who could to stay at home and

minimise social contact, saying all contact with others presented a risk of infection.

She said that besides the National Centre for Public Health (NNK), two additional labs would begin testing samples for the virus and more hospitals would treat patients. If the number of Covid-19 patients rises, infectology departments outside Budapest will also be involved in treating them, she said. Müller said that though there was sufficient space in hospitals for quarantining people, the authorities were also ordering people to home quarantine. Concerning the country's blood supply, she said all non-urgent surgeries had been cancelled, meaning that blood supply needs would also change.

The chief medical officer also said several health-care workers were in quarantine due to coming into close contact with patients, adding, however, that their initial tests had come back negative.

Meanwhile, she said Interior Minister Sándor Pintér's first test for the virus has come back negative, as did those of more than forty of his contacts. Moroccan media reported on Saturday that Abdelkader Amara, the transport minister, had tested positive for the virus. The minister last week visited Hungary and met the interior minister, among others. The Government Information Centre on Sunday said Pintér showed no symptoms of Covid-19 but would undergo the same examinations as everyone who had come into contact with patients.

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### **LAKATOS: VIOLATION OF RULES PUNISHABLE WITH FINE OF UP TO HUF 500,000**

Failure to comply with the rules set by the authorities concerning the coronavirus outbreak will constitute a misdemeanour and be punishable with a fine of up to 500,000 forints (EUR 1,500), the head of the emergency centre set up by the operative board coordinating the epidemic response said. Legislation on the emergency measures aimed at combatting the outbreak is already being drafted, Tibor Lakatos told a press conference, adding that the rules would be enforced by the police.

The government has also instructed the human resources ministry to keep a record of Hungary's full-time medical students so that if necessary, they could be called on to help manage the health crisis, he said. It will also authorise the police force to manage health data necessary for carrying out its duties, Lakatos added. Concerning police monitoring of residents' compliance with home quarantine regulations, he said so far 40 people had been caught breaking the rules.

As regards Monday's Denial-of-Service attack against the government information website for disseminating information on the coronavirus outbreak, Lakatos said the source of and intent behind the attack was under investigation.

Asked why Hungary's mobile container hospital was being built in Kiskunhalas, he said the southern Hungarian town was "relatively close" to the capital, where most of the infections have been identified, adding that it was also the area where the right infrastructure conditions for such a facility were in place.

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### **SZIJJÁRTÓ: FREIGHT TRAFFIC BETWEEN HUNGARY, SLOVENIA ONGOING UNDER STRICT CONTROL**

Road freight traffic between Hungary and Slovenia is still ongoing, albeit with tight control mechanisms in place, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Ljubljana, after talks with his counterpart, Anze Logar. Hungary still allows freight traffic headed for Hungary as "they bring goods and provide important services for Hungarians". Trucks heading for neighbouring countries are restricted to specific motorways, and obliged to use specific fuel stations, he said. Slovenia has shown full understanding towards the restrictions, Szijjártó said. The ban on non-Hungarians from entering the country helps protect Hungarians' health as well as that of citizens of the neighbouring countries, he said. Cooperation between Hungary and Slovenia has so far been "about missed opportunities", Szijjártó said. However, the Hungarian government

hopes that ties may be strengthened with the new Slovenian cabinet, which “would greatly benefit both Hungarians and Slovenians”.

“Hopefully, dialogue between the two countries will soon be determined by much more optimistic topics such as integrating our energy supply systems and opening new roads,” Szijjartó said.

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### **BUDAPEST MAYOR CALLS FOR ‘BRAVER’ MEASURES**

Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony has called for “braver measures” to contain the Covid-19 outbreak. Restrictive measures implemented so far to contain the epidemic have been “insufficient”, Karácsony said in a video message on Facebook. “What we see if we look at Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and other countries is that they have taken much braver measures,” the mayor said. “That is why I have asked the central government to allow local councils to restrict the opening hours of shops except those providing for basic needs,” he said. The operative board set up by Budapest to coordinate the city’s response to the coronavirus outbreak is monitoring the situation and makes decisions on a daily basis to keep the city going, he said. Karácsony asked people to stay at home if possible, as well as to care for the elderly.

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### **DK CALLS FOR MASS SCREENING**

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) is asking the government to supply proper protective masks to health workers and start mass screening for the new coronavirus. Two important elements of early protection against the epidemic is to ensure that the health-care sector is well-prepared, which means adequate protection for workers, and a large number of tests carried out, as proven by the example of South Korea, party lawmaker Zoltán Varga said. He said that the government’s performance so far had been “appalling”, adding that identifying the past contacts of coronavirus patients was useless unless tests were carried out. In response to a question, he said the opposition would make every effort to help the country overcome the situation with “the smallest amount of trauma”.

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### **HUNGARY EXPELS IRANIAN STUDENTS FOR VIOLATING QUARANTINE RULES**

Hungarian authorities have expelled another 13 Iranian students from the country and from the territory of the European Union for violating quarantine rules, the interior ministry said. The students had been

quarantined at Budapest’s St László hospital due to coronavirus, but they had left their rooms and behaved aggressively with health staff, the ministry said in a statement.

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### **FORINT SLIPS PAST 345 TO THE EURO**

The forint weakened as far as 345.04 to the euro in the afternoon on Monday, a new historical low. The currency weakened after the prime minister announced further restrictions to contain the spread of the coronavirus and said the budget would have to be redrafted.

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### **KURTÁG TO RECEIVE ROLF SCHOCK PRIZE**

Hungarian composer György Kurtág will be awarded the Swedish Rolf Schock Prize in October, for his achievements as a composer, teacher and performer, the Budapest Music Center said. Founded in 1993, the Rolf Schock Prize is awarded in the categories of philosophy and logics, mathematics, fine arts and music. Former laureates include Hungarian composer György Ligeti, Swedish mezzo soprano Anne Sofie von Otter, Latvian violinist Gidon Kremer and US jazz composer and saxophone player Wayne Shorter. The prize comes with an award of 400,000 Swedish crowns (EUR 37,000).