

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



Students wearing masks start final exams in Budapest.

MTI/Zsolt Szibetváry

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Coronavirus updates**

**Plenary session of parliament**

**Foreign minister announces agricultural machinery maker Yaris Kabin's investment**

## TOP STORY

# ORBÁN DEMANDS APOLOGY

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has called on the propagators of a recent “disinformation campaign against Hungary” to apologise to the Hungarian people.

Hungary is the victim of a “baseless, unprecedented attack and disinformation campaign”, Orbán said in a letter addressed to EPP members and leaders. This campaign, he added, had been waged when lives were on the line due to the novel coronavirus outbreak. The “attack” on Hungary was not the first, he said in the letter. But it was the “most despicable and most cynical”, it added.

He said those who had taken part in the campaign had spread “falsehoods and lies”, such as the claim that parliament had been shut down. Orbán said the reality was that parliament’s powers had actually been enhanced, adding that the body had the authority to end the state of emergency declared in March and repeal any of the government’s special measures. Orbán lamented that it was not just the conservative grouping’s “formal political opponents” but also “certain EPP politicians” who had engaged in “spreading fake news”. EPP leader Donald Tusk had “even gone as far as to draw a parallel between” the measures introduced in Hungary and Nazi legal scholar Carl Schmitt, he added.

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## **ORBÁN: EC CONFIRMS 'ATTACKS UNFOUNDED'**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán pointed out in his letter to EPP members and leaders that the European Commission had since confirmed that “these attacks are unfounded”. He cited Věra Jourová, the European Commission’s vice-president in charge of transparency and values, as confirming that Hungary’s epidemic response law was in compliance with EU laws. Orbán noted the European Parliament had censured Hungary in a resolution on April 17, and he accused the EP of incorporating “lies” into the text, thereby “making fools of themselves”. He added that the EP archives would preserve this iniquity, while at the same time the European Commission’s view of the matter would counterbalance the “political hysteria” surrounding Hungary. He said the damage could not be undone. At the same time, he expressed thanks “to our true allies” for “standing up for us” and speaking the truth in the face of pressure.

He said Fidesz would not allow its political opponents to take self-serving ownership of the rule of law as a political tool. Orbán added that Fidesz remained a leading conservative force.

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## **KÁSLER: HEALTH SERVICES TO RESTART ON APPOINTMENT**

Patients can again make appointments with their GPs, dentists and other doctors, Miklós Kásler, the human

resources minister, said. Some transplant operations and one-day surgeries will also be resumed. Patients are required to make the appointment by phone, Kásler said, adding that a maximum of four patients can be consulted in one hour and offices must be disinfected after the visit of each patient.

Concerning possible therapies for coronavirus patients, Kásler said that experimental treatments in Hungary were “promising”. He said that a patient in Budapest’s St. László hospital had been treated with the plasma of a donor who had recovered from Covid-19. The patient no longer needs to be supported by a ventilator, and will hopefully be released from hospital soon, the minister added. Six patients have received Tocilizumab, a medicine used to address haematological problems, Kásler said, adding that the therapy has prevented the condition of four patients from deteriorating, while another patient has been taken off ventilator.

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## **GOVT DETAILS EASED CURFEW RESTRICTIONS FOR PROVINCES**

Eased curfew restrictions for areas of Hungary outside Budapest and surrounding Pest County, where Covid-19 infection rates are the highest, have been published in the official gazette Magyar Közlöny. Most of the measures come into force on May 4. With the exception of Budapest and Pest County, the decree requires people who are not in the same

household to maintain a distance of at least 1.5m from other people. It requires all people to wear a mouth and nose covering when shopping and using public transport.

The decree keeps in place an earlier restriction limiting shoppers at supermarkets and pharmacies to people who are 65 and over between 9am and noon but it allows all businesses to open to customers.

Dine-in eating at catering establishments remains prohibited, unless the establishment seats guests in an outdoor area. Beaches, open-air spas, open-air museums and zoos may open to visitors. The decree places responsibility for ensuring compliance with social distancing rules on the operators of businesses and other establishments. The decree allows religious services, wedding ceremonies and funerals to take place, as long as participants comply with social distancing rules. It empowers universities and colleges to decide whether students may return to campuses, but it prohibits students from visiting dormitories.

A separate decree keeps all curfew restrictions earlier applied nationwide in place for Budapest and Pest County.

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## **FURTHER 11 PATIENTS DIE, 3,035 REGISTERED AS INFECTED**

A further 11 people have died in Hungary, bringing the total number of deaths to 351, while the number of registered novel coronavirus infections

has increased by 37 to 3,035, coronavirus. gov.hu said on Monday morning. Fully 630 people treated for the virus in hospital have recovered, while a total of 1,027 patients are still hospitalised, 55 of whom are on ventilators. Currently 10,459 people are under official home quarantine, while the number of tests carried out stands at 83,958. The most cases are in Budapest (1,484 people), followed by Pest County (401), Fejér county (304) and Komárom-Esztergom County (137). Vas County (14) has the lowest number of infections in Hungary.

### **SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY RECEIVES 17.5M FACE MASKS**

Hungary took delivery of 17.5 million face masks last week and will continue to receive protective equipment against coronavirus this week, the foreign minister said. Addressing parliament, Péter Szijjártó noted that Hungary has imported almost one hundred million face masks since the outbreak of the epidemic. The shipments last week also contained 620 ventilators and 850,000 doses of medicines, he said. Hungary further received 525,000 doses of virus tests kits, taking the number of imported kits to around 2.5 million, while an additional 1.2 million are on the way, Szijjártó said. The shipments also contained 16.4 million items of protective gear, including face shields, gloves and protective gowns, bringing their total number so far to 56 million items, he added. The minister dismissed press reports that many Chinese supplies fell

short of European standards, insisting the protective equipment did meet those standards and may be used without any reservations.

Commenting on debates around Europe concerning the easing restrictions and about concerns over their possible consequences, Szijjártó said every country sought to create balance between protecting the health of their citizens while restarting their economies. The first consideration, he added, was the most important.

Meanwhile, after signing a strategic cooperation agreement with staffing agency Prohuman on behalf of the government, Szijjártó said staffing agencies were likely to play a key role in the country's economic recovery following the novel coronavirus crisis.

Prohuman has partnerships with several hundred companies and is among the country's top ten employers, the minister noted. The HR company had net revenue of over 34 billion forints (EUR 96m) last year, public records show. Hungary's government has so far signed strategic cooperation agreements with 85 companies.

### **MOST DIOCESES OUTSIDE BUDAPEST RESUME CHURCH SERVICES**

Most Hungarian dioceses outside of Budapest are resuming church services with precautions in place, in line with the official easing of restrictions in provincial areas from Monday. Worshippers are being asked to strictly observe rules such as physical distancing and mask-

wearing. Disinfectants are being placed at the entrance of churches. It is up to the discretion of local bishops to advise people above the age of 65 to stay away from church services. The dioceses of Esztergom-Budapest and Székesfehérvár as well as the Pest county part of the diocese of Vác have decided to stick to lockdown rules, given the relatively high number of coronavirus infections in these areas.

### **DK DEMANDS FREE SCREENING OF PATIENTS**

Opposition DK has demanded that every patient should get free coronavirus screening before receiving health services. The government has decided to restart health services which had been stopped because of the epidemic a few weeks ago, DK health expert Zoltán Komáromi told an online press conference. Only those who present a negative test result for novel coronavirus should be allowed to receive dental care, ear, nose and throat and various surgery services, he said, adding that the state did not offer screening for such patients and only those could use the services who can afford to pay 30,000-60,000 forints (EUR 85-170) to private clinics for testing.

### **HUNGARY HOUSING MARKET TUMBLES IN APRIL**

Hungary's housing market shrank by 58% in April compared with the same month a year earlier, on the back of a

lockdown and economic uncertainty due to the novel coronavirus epidemic, according to real estate broker Duna House. Property sales came to 5,971 in April compared with 14,166 last year, Duna House said. In January-April, the sales of flats and houses in Hungary came to 40,105, down 24% from the same period in 2019. Citing a weekly breakdown of sales, the broker said the market reached its low point in the first two weeks of April, when sales were down 67%. Demand has since started to pick back up, Duna House said, adding that actual sales were only expected to rise, however, if the epidemic remains under control.

### **FINAL EXAMS START IN HUNGARY SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

School graduation examinations got under way at 1,197 locations across the country on Monday, with over 70,000 students taking the Hungarian language and literature test on the first day. The exams will continue

with mathematics on Tuesday. Zoltán Maruzsa, state secretary for public education, said the exams would start at 9am, rather than the traditional 8am to allow students and commuters to use public transport separately. He said that during the tests, students would be provided face masks and disinfectants. He added that a maximum 10 students would be staying in the same classroom to ensure the necessary distance between them.

### **KDNP SUBMITS PROPOSAL AGAINST RATIFICATION OF ISTANBUL CONVENTION**

The co-ruling Christian Democrats have submitted a policy statement to parliament rejecting the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, arguing that certain aspects of the convention go against the government's migration policy. KDNP group spokesman Lőrinc Nacsa said the ideology of the convention was contrary to Hungary's legal order and his party's beliefs.

The document "tries to prescribe a social construction of gender" and pressurising countries to "consider the aspect of gender identities when offering refugee status", he said. KDNP is against supporting a convention "that would speed up or simplify" immigration to Europe, he said.

### **WIZZ AIR TO LAUNCH BUDAPEST-ABU DHABI SERVICE**

Low-cost airline Wizz Air will launch a new service between Hungary and the United Arab Emirates on June 3, the company said. The Budapest-Abu Dhabi service will be operated on Monday and Sunday until the end of September and on Monday, Wednesday and Friday after that period, it said. Wizz Air will be the first European low-cost airline to operate a flight to Abu Dhabi, the company added. Wizz Air will set up a new subsidiary in the UAE, which is expected to begin operation in the second half of this year.