

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zsolt Czeglédi

Storm in Debrecen

UPCOMING EVENTS

Coronavirus updates

Govt official's presser on Zalaegerszeg tourist complex upgrade project

TOP STORY

PARLT LIFTS GOVT'S EMERGENCY POWERS

Parliament terminated the emergency powers handed to the government in March in response to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus epidemic.

The law submitted by Gergely Gulyás, the head of the Prime Minister's Office, which required a two-thirds majority of lawmakers in attendance was approved with 192 votes in favour and no votes against. The date the emergency is lifted will be decided by the government.

Parliament also passed a law sponsored by Gulyás on temporary health measures related to the epidemic and the state of epidemiological preparedness with 135 for, 54 against and 3 abstentions. Under the law, the government may order a state of health emergency at the proposal of the chief medical officer. Such an emergency can be called if people's lives are endangered or if the fitness of health-care staff is compromised to an extent that demand for health care outstrips supply. It also applies if hospitals are burdened to the extent that the quality of care is seriously compromised.

The law defines six months as the maximum period it can be applied, though the government can order an extension. The law authorises armed Hungarian army personnel to carry out tasks related to health emergencies.

**GULYÁS: GOVT'S
EMERGENCY POWERS SET
TO EXPIRE WEDNESDAY
MIDNIGHT**

Gergely Gulyás, the Prime Minister's chief of staff, has called for the legislation on terminating the emergency powers handed to the government in March in response to the novel coronavirus outbreak passed by parliament to be proclaimed as a law as soon as possible so that the state of emergency could be lifted as early as midnight on Wednesday. The government welcomes parliament's decision to approve the termination of the state of emergency, Gulyás told a press conference in Parliament. The head of the PM's Office thanked everyone who had contributed to the coronavirus response efforts, but lamented that "the left failed to participate in this" and that the situation had not brought about unity in Hungary's political life. "The rules of the Hungarian constitution are clear," Gulyás said. "The government in this situation had special powers to pass laws, but this is now over."

"We've got through the first wave [of the epidemic]. We don't know if there'll be a second one, but the operative board will remain active and the provisions passed into law will remain in place," he said. Gulyás said Hungarians would get a chance to give their opinions on the government's response to the epidemic in the coming nationwide

"national consultation" survey. "The state of emergency is over, but until a vaccine is developed, certain measures will have to remain in place," Gulyás said.

Meanwhile, asked about the festivities planned for the Aug 20 national holiday, Gulyás said the government had yet to make a final decision in the matter. He added, at the same time, that if the festivities went ahead, they would provide a good chance to restart domestic tourism. He also said that the government will continue to keep parliament updated about the status of the epidemic. The state of epidemiological preparedness does not compare to the state of emergency as it largely only applies to health-care-related measures, he said. Gulyás added that the government had not yet decided on whether or not it will make changes to the rules on special shopping times for elderly people. In response to another question, he said contrary to reports by left-wing and international media outlets during the state of emergency that Hungary's parliament was not meeting, it had actually been the European Parliament and the Budapest assembly that had suspended their sessions.

Gulyás said that "several left-wing mayors took advantage of the situation" in the recent period and "while they demand transparency from the left, when in power they're the ones who are the least transparent." Today "it is only natural" that a left-wing local council is not transparent, but civil

rights groups "never bring this up", he said. As regards the renovation of Budapest's iconic Chain Bridge, Gulyás said that if István Tarlós were still the mayor, the renovation works would already be under way. The government stands by its commitments regarding the project, the PM's Office chief said, adding that Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony was attempting to "start a needless dispute" over the issue. The government wants no part of this and would rather see Chain Bridge renovated, Gulyás added.

**CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER:
'VITALLY IMPORTANT' TO
MAINTAIN VIGILANCE**

It is vitally important to maintain vigilance against any possible resurgence of the novel coronavirus in the country, the chief Medical Officer told an online press conference. Cecília Müller noted that the pandemic around the world was still a major problem and "epidemiological preparedness" still needed to be maintained in Hungary. Addressing a news conference of the operative board responsible for containing the epidemic, she added the situation in neighbouring countries was still uncertain and the virus was still present in Hungary. Müller also said many parents sought child care during the summer holidays, and grandparents who do not have an illness making them vulnerable to the virus could care for children who are



healthy. Meanwhile, she said people travelling abroad should familiarize themselves with the rules that apply to their destination by going to the website of the foreign ministry or the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The operative board's spokesman, Róbert Kiss, noted that parliament is scheduled to vote on terminating the state of emergency today. Accordingly, travel restrictions related to health-care staff and law-enforcement employees, as well as government officials, will cease. Further, the general public will be allowed to go out to cinemas and theatres, he said. He noted that an epidemiological unit for deployment to emerging virus hotspots was set up on Monday.

TWO PATIENTS DIE, 4,077 REGISTERED INFECTIONS IN HUNGARY

Two patients have died in the past 24 hours, both elderly with underlying illnesses, bringing the total number of Covid-19 fatalities to 565, while registered novel coronavirus infections in Hungary have increased by 1 to 4,077, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Tuesday morning. Fully 2,516 hospitalised patients have made a recovery. The number of active infections stands at 996. Forty percent of the active cases, 60% of the fatalities and 48% of full recoveries are in Budapest, the site said. Fully 255 Covid-19 patients are undergoing treatment in hospital, 17 of whom are on ventilators. Altogether 7,545 are in

official home quarantine. The number of tests carried out stands at 236,828.

The government says the aim is to steadily resume normal life based on a strict schedule, and it calls on citizens to follow general precautions.

A parliamentary vote on terminating the state of emergency related to the coronavirus epidemic and maintaining an epidemiological preparedness was held during the day. Budapest (1,927 people) has the highest number of infections, followed by Pest County (593) and Fejér County (376). Békés County (13) has the lowest number.

ORBÁN URGES VOJVODINA HUNGARIANS TO PARTICIPATE IN SERBIA ELECTIONS

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, in an interview with Subotica (Szabadka) broadcaster Pannon RTV, urged ethnic Hungarians living in Serbia's Vojvodina region to vote in the country's elections this coming weekend. The fate of Hungarians is influenced by all elections, including the one about to take place in Serbia, the prime minister said. The composition of the government in Hungary has an effect on all Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin, Orbán said, adding that it was also important for Hungarians beyond the border to elect the right leaders so that they could protect Hungarian interests. "So all elections are important."

"One disadvantage Hungarians have is that we don't have relatives; we're

a cultural and linguistic island in the middle of Europe," the prime minister said. He added that his government's mission was to preserve Hungarian culture.

As regards the elections in Serbia, Orbán said the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) was the only ethnic Hungarian party that had the experience, history and prestige that could be taken seriously. VMSZ has what it takes to unify the Hungarian community, he said, adding that István Pásztor, the party's leader, had kept all his promises and fulfilled his end of every agreement with the Hungarian government. "So we have good reason to believe that as long as he's the leader of the Hungarian community in Vojvodina, the relationship between the Hungarian government and Serbia's Hungarian community will be based on trust," the prime minister said.

Orbán also said the election will also have a fundamental impact on Hungarian-Serbian ties. Because of the history between the two countries, Hungary and Serbia need goodwill, trust and friendship to see each other as friends and allies, he said, adding that Serbia's current government agreed with these sentiments. He said the end of hostilities between Hungarians and Serbs in Vojvodina had been a significant step forward for the two communities. He added, at the same time, that there was more potential to establish more companies and create more wealth in the region. The prime minister said

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it was important for Hungarians and Serbians to benefit from the good political relations between the two countries. Budapest should not limit its focus to Vojvodina, he said, adding that it must consider all of Serbia. Accordingly, Hungarian capital must not stop at Vojvodina but should strive to create more and more Serbian-Hungarian joint ventures in all parts of the country, he said. "We need a strong Serbian economy because the stronger our neighbours, the more we will benefit."

On another subject, Orbán said he believed the European Union needed Serbia more than Serbia needed the EU. He said that by having been the first EU member state to reopen its borders with Serbia, Hungary could also contribute to the country's European integration. The prime minister said Serbia was of key importance to the EU in terms of security. "Europe's security cannot be guaranteed without Serbia," Orbán said. Concerning the upgrade of the Budapest-Belgrade railway line, Orbán said work along the Hungarian section was progressing a bit slower than it should. He added that the two countries could use a few more similar projects that could prove that Serbians and Hungarians could work together. These would also prove to the EU that Serbia is capable of carrying out such projects and that it is important to involve the country in them, Orbán argued, adding that Hungary is in continuous talks with Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić

about the opportunities available, for instance, in the energy sector.

The prime minister also said that whereas before 2010, Hungary, as the motherland, had "acted as a stepmother, it now acts as a mother". He promised Vojvodina Hungarians that they could continue to count on Hungary as a "real motherland" in the future, as well.

SOCIALISTS: LEFT CONTINUES TO WORK TO FORM 'NEW HUNGARIAN REPUBLIC'

An opposition Socialist politician has said Hungary's left wing will not give up on striving to form "a new Hungarian republic". Speaking at an event marking the anniversary of the execution of one-time prime minister Imre Nagy in 1958 and his reburial in 1989, István Hiller, a deputy speaker of parliament, vowed that Hungary's Socialists would continue to protest against attempts to relativise Nagy's role during the 1956 revolution.

Hiller declared the Hungarian left wing as Nagy's "intellectual heir" and he pledged to pursue his policy of "protecting Hungarian freedom".

Speaking at a commemoration held in Parliament attended by members of the Socialist group, he said "all Hungarians in the new republic" would have the opportunity to thrive based on hard work and talent, which he said would be a place worth living in and returning to.

MINISTRY: HUNGARY MAINTAINS COMPETITIVE POSITION

Hungary is still competitive internationally in spite of the pandemic, the finance ministry said, citing the Swiss IMD competitiveness rankings which shows Hungary still in 47th place, unchanged since 2018. Hungary remains an attractive international investment target and among the fastest-growing economies in the European Union, with competitive tax regulations and a skilled workforce, the ministry said.

IMD has Singapore in first place followed by Switzerland and Denmark.

When it comes to the domestic economy, Hungary advanced by 5 places to 18th thanks to its rapid growth and the high investment rate, the ministry said.

In terms of international investments, it improved by 23 spots to 40th place, while on the employment scale, it advanced 14 places to 20th place thanks to its high employment rate and falling jobless rate.

Before the coronavirus outbreak, Hungary's economy was among the EU's fastest-growing economies, and this was combined with strict fiscal management and a declining public debt, the ministry said, adding that Hungary is now prioritising relaunching the economy with a focus on job-protection, helping out businesses and households with precisely targeted economic protection measures.

The National Competitiveness Council will continue its work, which



has already paid dividends in improving the country's competitiveness in many areas, the ministry added.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARIAN COMPANIES MAKING CROSS-BORDER INVESTMENTS CAN BID FOR GOV GRANTS

Hungarian companies that undertake cross-border investments will be eligible to bid for grants from a 25 billion forint (EUR 72m) government fund starting on Friday, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, announced in parliament. Hungarian companies making investments in cross-border areas can bid for support of up to 800,000 euros in a single amount if jobs are protected in Hungary and neighbouring countries, Szijjártó said, adding that the subsidy amount is capped at 60% of the sum invested.

JOBBIK PRESSES FOR RESTORING BORDER GUARD

The conservative opposition Jobbik party is calling on the government to set up a dedicated Border Guard, MP János Stummer said. Although the novel coronavirus pandemic has brought illegal migration to a halt, the ageing of Europe, as well as the population explosion and the ongoing wars in the Middle East justify the need to calculate with this phenomenon in the long term, he said. It is still unclear on which route and at what

time mass migration will restart but Hungary should take effective steps to prepare for containing the next wave of illegal migrants, Stummer said. He also demanded pay rises for soldiers and the police to make these jobs once again attractive and ease labour shortage. Hungary's independent Border Guard was wound up and replaced by police patrols in 2007.

FINANCE MINISTER: HUF 50 BN FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION BUILDINGS, SCHOOLS SPORTS FACILITIES

Another 50 billion forint (EUR 144m) is available in the coming years for building public education institutions and school sports facilities, Mihály Varga, the finance minister, announced in a video on social media after signing a loan agreement with the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB).

The low-interest loan can be used to build and renovate schools, sports halls, gyms and swimming pools, Varga noted, helping almost 10,000 young people.

In 2016, Hungary concluded the first loan agreement on the development of education institutions with the CEB and the European Investment Bank, each loan worth 15 billion forints, according to the finance ministry. More than 80 education institutions have been renovated and around 50 sports facilities built as a result. In January, a loan agreement totalling 50 billion forints was concluded

with the European Investment Bank. The current agreement with the CEB forms the next stage, guaranteeing the construction of 8 schools, 16 classrooms, 20 gyms, 26 training pools and 17 handball halls.

SZIJJÁRTÓ URGES EU TO SCRAP LIMIT ON GOVT SUPPORT FOR INVESTMENTS

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó called on the European Union to scrap the limit on the amount of funding member states can provide in support for investments by companies, arguing that doing so would be crucial for job creation amid the economic downturn caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic. Speaking to public media in Vienna ahead of a meeting with his Austrian, Czech, Slovak and Slovenian counterparts, Szijjártó said the Hungarian government agreed with Austria's proposal for the EU to allow member states to support investments in their own territories from their state budgets without limits. "We consider it completely unnecessary to uphold limitations on state support for investments during these times," the minister said.

Szijjártó said it was only possible to save jobs and create new ones through new investments, which he said needed government support. "Unfortunately EU institutions are just as slow as they had been before the pandemic," he said. "We've been talking to Brussels about this for over a month and a half but we still haven't received permission or a

reply.” Szijjártó said central Europe had successfully completed the first phase of implementing protection measures against the epidemic thanks in large part to strong cooperation among the region’s countries. Now the focus must shift to the economic response, Szijjártó said, adding that the aim was to ensure that this aspect of the epidemic response measures was equally successful. This is important, as Hungary’s neighbours are also key trading partners, he added. “For us, central Europeans, the goal must be nothing less than having our economies and businesses be stronger after the pandemic than they were before it,” Szijjártó said.

HUNGARY’S C/A DEFICIT OVER EUR 1 BN IN APRIL

Hungary posted a 1.07 billion euro deficit on its current account in April as the deficit on trade widened sharply, according to preliminary monthly figures published by the National Bank of Hungary (NBH). A deficit was already apparent in March as the pandemic started to affect the economy. The c/a

deficit in April was more than three times the March figure. The export of goods dropped by more than one third while imports were down by just over a quarter from March.

BĂILE TUȘNAD SUMMER UNIVERSITY SET TO BE CANCELLED AMID COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

The Bálványos Summer University and Student Camp in Băile Tușnad (Tusnádfürdő), in central Romania, looks set to be cancelled this year amid the situation around the novel coronavirus epidemic, according to reports by commercial HírTV. The event, which traditionally features a keynote address by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and celebrated its 30th anniversary last year, is next expected to be organised in 2021, HírTV’s website said.

SZEGED RESEARCH TEAM IDENTIFIES NEW COVID-19 RECEPTOR

A receptor discovered by using artificial intelligence developed

at the Szeged Biological Research Centre (SZBK) has opened a new potential avenue in protection against Covid-19 infection, the Eötvös Loránd Research Network (ELKH) said. A team of Hungarian researchers of SZBK’s Biochemical Institute and their partner professors, Peter Cullen and Yohei Yamauchi of the University of Bristol, have found that the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus can enter the host cell through a receptor they discovered during their research on influenza, ELKH said in a statement.

This receptor, neuropilin-1 (NRP1), was discovered on the surface of the host cell. Several laboratories around the world are working on developing an effective therapy by researching the process of Covid-19 infection. Researches so far have identified the angiotensin-convertase 2 enzyme (ACE2) through which Covid-19 can enter the host cell. Research findings of the AI model developed in Szeged have identified the NRP1 receptor as a potential new target in future Covid-19 therapy in addition to the already well-known ACE2.

