

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/György Varga

Flooding Rinya river destroys bridge near Nagyatád

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Coronavirus updates

## TOP STORY

### SZIJJÁRTÓ: EU RECOVERY DEAL 'BEST POSSIBLE'

Participants in last week's European Union summit reached "the best deal" concerning the community's pandemic recovery package, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó told television France24.

"Our primary goal was that these European resources should be distributed fairly and on objective criteria. Giving in to any blackmail or some countries pressing others and setting subjective criteria were out of the question," he said. "Tying access to community funds to some criteria for certain countries is unacceptable. No member must decide whether another could have access to those funds or not."

Answering a suggestion that solidarity in distributing the funds could be a first step towards a federal Europe, Szijjártó said "we do not believe in the ideal which could be called United States of Europe. The EU could only be strong if its members are strong and insist on their identity, as well as their religious and cultural heritage".

In reply to a question, Szijjártó called Dutch PM Mark Rutte "a pro-immigration" politician, who "hates our sharply anti-migration policy".

Concerning a possible second wave of the coronavirus epidemic, he said that Hungary has been "cautious" in allowing citizens of countries outside the EU to enter, but entry is free for all European citizens.

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## **JUSTICE MINISTER: HUNGARY 'WINS BATTLE' OVER EU BUDGET**

The Hungarian government "won a battle" at last week's European Union summit over the community's budget, but "the war goes on" in the EU's institutions, Justice Minister Judit Varga told public Kossuth Rádió. "Leftist-liberal forces would not accept that some have a different position on Europe's Christian roots, immigration, multi-culturalism and the role of the family," she insisted. "Though they now lost a battle..., they won't give up fighting," she added.

Concerning the EU's decision-making mechanism, she said that procedures were "lengthy and complicated" but stressed that the EU was "not a superpower over the nations" adding that "the European Council's conclusions set political directions". The European Parliament, on the other hand, appeared at the time of the coronavirus crisis as "part of the problem rather than the solution", she said, adding that the body had "attacked Hungary" over its coronavirus prevention law. She also said that the EP was politically biased and "cannot see that the large EU countries are in great trouble" and could soon be on the verge of bankruptcy.

Varga said that members of the EU are on consensus with regard to respecting the community's

fundamental values such as "freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights". The members, however, "clearly supported" that the European Commission "should not threaten members with foggy and abstract sanctions linked to the rule of law", citing budgetary interests and fiscal discipline, Varga said. "When the heads of state and government declare that criteria related to the rule of law must not be linked to financial considerations, that is a clear, political directive," the minister said.

Concerning the EU's Article 7 procedure against Hungary, Varga said that her government had "answered all questions from a legal aspect", adding that she hoped that the procedure would be concluded "as early as possible", before the end of the EU's German presidency.

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## **CORONAVIRUS - HUNGARY CASES INCREASE BY 11**

The number of registered coronavirus infections in Hungary has increased by 11 to 4,435 over the past 24 hours, [koronavirus.gov.hu](http://koronavirus.gov.hu) said on Sunday. The number of fatalities remained unchanged at 596, while 3,329 people have made a recovery. There are 510 active infections and 69 coronavirus patients are being treated in hospital for Covid-19, six on ventilators. Fully 7,824 people are in official home quarantine, while the number of tests carried out stands at 326,554.

New restrictions on entering the country came into force recently, with

the aim of preventing the import of infections from abroad. Foreign countries have been classed into three categories: red, yellow, green. The authorities are screening arrivals and taking action based on the severity of the infection rate in each country. This can include ordering home quarantine for 14 days and compulsory testing. The government and the chief medical officer review the classification of the countries on a weekly basis.

To avoid a flare-up of the epidemic, the government has cancelled the celebrations that draw large crowds on the August 20 national holiday, including the traditional fireworks and the air show. Meanwhile, gatherings of more than 500 people are banned until August 15.

Most infections have been registered in Budapest (2,029), followed by Pest County (675) and the counties of Fejér (380), Komárom-Esztergom (312) and Zala (264). Tolna County has the fewest infections (13).

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## **INDEX AFFAIR TRIGGERS DEMONSTRATION IN BUDAPEST**

A demonstration was held in Budapest on Friday evening in protest against the dismissal of the editor-in-chief of news website [index.hu](http://index.hu), and for media freedom. The protest started at the editorial office in north Buda, then the demonstrators marched to Buda Castle.

Last Wednesday László Bodolai, chief of the foundation that exercises the employer's rights at Index, initiated the dismissal of Szabolcs Dull. Two days later the portal announced in a "service statement" that all editors and almost all staff members had decided to quit.

"The journalists of Index have demonstrated that it makes sense having a moral backbone in this country," András Fekete-Győr, leader of the opposition Momentum party, told the crowd, which filled Szent György Square next to the prime minister's and the presidential offices. They had to stand up because "100 metres from here there is a cowardly little man who does not dare to face a mirror", he said, adding that "we are fed up with cowardly politicians and their propagandists." "I would like to build a Hungary of brave people..., a country with a free press, an unbiased public media, an independent Academy of Sciences, a country with a Central European University and Index," Fekete-Győr said.

Independent lawmaker Ákos Hadházy said that "this demonstration should not be the last, the protests should continue". He insisted that the senior officials of the public media should be appointed on the basis of consensus. "There is no regime against which you can't fight successfully but the stricter the dictatorial rule, the stronger resistance one should put up against it," he said.

The demonstration was initiated by Momentum and attended by politicians of several left-wing parties.

### **LMP LEADERS, KARÁCSONY CALL FOR GOVERNMENT CHANGE, 'GREEN TURNAROUND'**

Leaders of opposition LMP and Gergely Karácsony, mayor of Budapest and co-chair of Párbeszéd, emphasised that the government should be replaced and called for efforts to promote environmental policies, at an LMP congress on Saturday.

LMP co-leader Erzsébet Schmuck said her party was ready to cooperate with other opposition parties but added that LMP would only participate in a government which is committed to saving the environment. Concerning LMP's dwindling support, Schmuck said that "voters' focus has now shifted from green issues to the (coronavirus) crisis".

János Kenderney, LMP's other co-leader, said that "the country's success hinges on a green systems change", and insisted that "without the greens anyone could sell our future anytime".

Karácsony welcomed LMP and Párbeszéd's cooperation at local levels and said "they should seek each-other's alliance so that the opposition's programme (for the next election) should have the most green content". "The government must

be ousted but that is only one step towards meeting the goal: building a sustainable, socially sensitive and green country," he said.

### **CORONAVIRUS - SOCIALISTS DEMAND CONVENING PARLIAMENTARY INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE**

The opposition Socialist Party has demanded that a parliamentary investigating committee should be convened next week to assess the measures the government had taken to combat the novel coronavirus epidemic.

The Socialists insist that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Human Resources Minister Miklós Kásler should attend the meeting and answer their questions, lawmaker Ildikó Borbély Bangó told an online press conference on Saturday.

She said that Hungarian health care is hit by a grave shortage of manpower, noting that the number of districts without a general practitioner of their own has increased from 93 in 2010 to 455 by now, and half of GPs are aged over 55.

Bangó called it surprising that while the number of patients infected by the novel coronavirus keeps increasing, Kásler has allowed health-care workers over 65 to return to their job.

Ruling Fidesz in response said that "left-wingers have hindered

protection (against the virus) from the beginning". In a statement sent to MTI Fidesz condemned the leftist parties for refusing to support the government's coronavirus law and related measures.

### **SOCIALISTS URGE GOVT TO GUARANTEE SAFETY OF ELDERLY CARE HOMES**

The opposition Socialists have called on the government to assess the situation in all elderly care homes and make them safe before a second wave of the novel coronavirus epidemic.

Many elderly people are too concerned to move into a care home for fear of the coronavirus epidemic, Lajos Korózs, the Socialist leader of parliament's welfare committee, told an online press conference on Facebook. He noted, however, that hospitals, rather than homes had turned out to be hotbeds of the virus at its first outbreak.

All care homes should be provided with protective gear and its staffers with a decent salary, he said, reiterating the demand that the government

should grant all people working in the social sector the one-off bonus of 500,000 forints (EUR 1,420) health-care workers had been granted after the epidemic.

### **PAYMENT OF COMPENSATION FOR SEGREGATED ROMA STARTED**

Half of the compensation payment stipulated by court for Roma who used to be segregated at school in rural northern Hungary was transferred to the beneficiaries on Friday morning and the other half will be paid within a month, the prime minister's commissioner László Horváth, a lawmaker of ruling Fidesz, said.

Horváth told a press conference in Gyöngyöspata that "the lesson has been learnt" and "this cannot be repeated anywhere else in Hungary in the future". A recent legal amendment supported by a great majority in parliament will guarantee that courts do not order financial compensation in similar cases, he added.

If anybody suffers disadvantage in education, it will have to be compensated by extra training and "no more money-making segregation lawsuits will be possible", he said. Horváth reiterated the government's position that the court ruling concerning the compensation of a combined 100 million forints (EUR 285,000) was "unfair and excessive".

"It resulted from a politically motivated money-making scheme which was masterminded, organised and implemented by a foundation whose main sponsor is [US financier] George Soros", he said.

The Debrecen Appeals Court in September 2019 ruled that Roma children in Gyöngyöspata had been segregated unlawfully at school and their right to equal treatment was violated. The court required the local authority and the school district to pay compensation to the children's families for each year spent in segregation.

The local authority and the school district asked the Kúria, Hungary's supreme court, to review the binding ruling last year but the Kúria upheld the Debrecen appeals court's ruling.