

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/György Varga

Renewed Benedictine monastery in Kőszeg, W Hungary

UPCOMING EVENTS

Coronavirus updates

38th Hungarian Press Photo Exhibition opens

KSH releases tourism, foreign trade figures for July

TOP STORY

GETTING FLU JAB 'MORE IMPORTANT THAN BEFORE'

Getting vaccinated against the flu is getting increased emphasis during the novel coronavirus epidemic because it can protect at-risk groups against at least one of the diseases, Hungary's chief epidemiologist said.

The flu season is approaching and at-risk groups are the same as for the new virus, such as the elderly, people with underlying medical conditions and those that recently had an operation, János Szlávik of the Budapest South Pest Hospital told public broadcaster Kossuth Rádió. "The flu vaccine is already available so it is important to address people who usually do not get it but are in a potential vulnerable group," he added. The flu shot is also important to doctors because it can help them factor out the flu when formulating a diagnosis, Szlávik said.

In response to a question, he said waste water samples taken around Hungary indicated that the number of coronavirus infections could be on the rise in the next 4-10 days. He added that it was wrong to assume that the virus is not a threat to younger people because they too could end up in intensive care and potentially die from it. Coronavirus mortality rates are much higher than that of the flu, Szlávik added.

Hungary's coronavirus death toll reached 625 on Monday after another Covid-19 patient died.

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ONE DIES, REGISTERED CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS UP BY 576 IN HUNGARY

One Covid-19 patient with an underlying illness has died, and the number of registered coronavirus infections in Hungary has risen by 576 to 8,963 over the past 24 hours, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Monday morning. The number of fatalities stands at 625, and 3,961 people have made a recovery. There are 4,377 active infections and 164 Covid-19 patients are being treated in hospital, 11 on ventilators. Altogether 21,756 people are in official home quarantine and 481,424 tests have been carried out.

The site warned Hungarians to observe social distancing guidelines and hygiene regulations. The government closed borders to foreigners from Sept 1, with certain exceptions, re-introducing border protection measures in force during the first wave of the epidemic. Most infections have been registered in Budapest (3,921), followed by Pest County (1,284) and the counties of Fejér (556), Komárom-Esztergom (377), Zala (336) and Hajdú-Bihar (322). Békés County has the fewest infections (38).

FIVE MORE SCHOOLS SUSPEND TEACHING, EIGHT SWITCH TO DIGITAL EDUCATION

Another five schools have suspended classroom teaching due to coronavirus, and a further eight is switching to

digital education, a government official said. The operative board coordinating response to the novel coronavirus epidemic has ordered three schools to halt traditional classroom teaching completely, while another five had to re-introduce digital education in specific classes, Zoltán Maruzsa, secretary of public education, said. Last week, four nurseries and six schools suspended teaching, Maruzsa noted.

In the coming period, infections in schools will be handled individually, with schools switching to digital education if necessary and returning to normal operations as soon as the spread of the virus is contained, he said. "Digital education was an effective precautionary measure in the spring, but I think it is unimaginable to have the country go for an entire school year with digital education," he said.

DK SLAMS FOUR-DAY WAIT FOR CORONAVIRUS TEST RESULTS

The opposition Democratic Coalition said it was "irresponsible and dangerous" that it takes four days to receive the results of coronavirus tests provided by the state. "A great number of people have reported this problem and also complained that there is a four-day delay in testing contacts," party spokesman Balázs Barkóczi said. He added that the delays made it impossible to identify infected persons in time. Barkóczi reiterated the party's request to boost state testing capacities and make free testing

available to everyone who has health insurance.

KÖVÉR: UNIVERSITIES MUST SERVE AS STRONG BASIS OF HUNGARIAN CULTURAL SOVEREIGNTY

Hungarian universities must serve as strong basic institutions of Hungarian sovereignty in addition to successfully participating in the international higher education scene, the speaker of parliament said at an academic year opening event in Budapest.

The structural changes under way in higher education serve that goal, László Kövér said at the University of Veterinary Medicine.

Under a broader scheme, the operations of several universities are being taken over from the state by separate foundations, allowing the universities greater autonomy and enabling them to adapt even more swiftly to changing economic and social conditions, he said. "Greater independence must however not mean gradual departure from Hungarian reality, from national and social expectations," Kövér said. He said university autonomy had to be used for strengthening rather than destroying Hungarian cultural sovereignty.

SOCIALISTS APPEAL REJECTION OF REFERENDUM BID AT TOP COURT

The opposition Socialists have submitted an appeal to the Kúria,

Hungary's supreme court, over the National Election Committee (NVB) rejecting a submission by the party on holding a referendum concerning the protection of Hungary's natural lakes.

Party director Zsolt Molnár told a press conference in front of the court building that the NVB's decision was "appalling", adding that the Socialists trust the Kúria would make a "positive decision". Molnár expressed hope that after the referendum Hungary's free waters would indeed become freely accessible to all and all attempts to overdevelop beaches and camping sites, and drain natural marshlands would be forbidden. He said that during the autumn term of parliament, the Socialists would submit a comprehensive amendment proposal for the law on Lake Balaton.

NVB rejected the Socialists' submission on August 24. The Socialists had intended to ask citizens whether public beaches on natural lakes should be accessible free of charge and whether parliament should ban the sale of public beaches. A third question concerned whether construction projects on them should be banned.

LMP URGES TALKS ON NUCLEAR WASTE STORAGE

Opposition LMP has called for broad consultations on the storage of radioactive waste in Hungary.

László Lóránt Keresztes, the party's group leader, told an online press conference that LMP expects the

political players involved in such talks to make their positions on the issue of nuclear waste disposal clear.

Keresztes, who called the storage of radioactive waste and spent fuel rods "one of the greatest challenges of the coming decades", slammed the government for "its failure to address the issue" over the past ten years.

Referring to plans to build a radioactive waste repository in the Boda area, in southern Hungary, Keresztes said the village's proximity to the city of Pécs ruled it out as a possible waste storage site and called on experts to find alternative locations. Also, the residents of a municipality chosen as the site of a nuclear waste repository should be granted the right to veto such decisions, he added.

Like all over the world, the storage of spent fuel rods is an unresolved issue in Hungary, Keresztes said, noting the absence of the necessary technology. Because the financing of nuclear waste storage is also not resolved, he argued, the government "acted irresponsibly when it approved the expansion of the Paks nuclear plant." LMP wants to use the talks on nuclear waste disposal to discuss the tasks concerning the issue as well as the responsibility of the political and professional players involved, Keresztes said. The party also aims to establish a broad consensus on any decisions made on the storage of radioactive waste. "It's time to stop wasting time and dodging the issue," Keresztes said, adding that the budget was missing around one

thousand billion forints (EUR 2.8bn) for addressing the problem.

SZIJJÁRTÓ ATTENDS GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONY OF PLANT OIL FACTORY

Hungary's government sees as allies all companies willing to invest into preserving jobs, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said at the ground-breaking ceremony of Pannon Növényolajgyártó in Foktő, in southern Hungary. The firm is building a plant oil refinery investing 22 billion forints (EUR 66.0m) with 1.8 billion forints in government support. Szijjártó said the Hungarian economy's best chance of becoming successful is the work of its citizens and not international loans leading to vulnerable economies. The government therefore does everything in its power to protect Hungarians' health and jobs, he said.

COLLEGIUM HUNGARICUM ROME TO RE-OPEN TO PUBLIC

An exhibition commemorating the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain will open in Collegium Hungaricum cultural institute in Rome on September 10. The exhibition will present some 40 paintings, statues and visual installations by 21 Hungarian contemporary artists including János Aknay, György Jovián, István Orosz, György Szemadám and József Szurcsik,

among others, the institute told MTI. The works on display are the artists' reflection on Hungary's democratic transition and events that took place in 1989, it said. The institute said it will re-open to the public after the spring coronavirus lockdown with the exhibition running in the Palazzo Falconieri until October 8.

HUNGARY HELPS FUNDS USED TO FINANCE HEALTH, EDUCATION PROJECTS IN KENYA

Using funds from the Hungary Helps programme, the Tangaza Catholic University will open a new agriculture faculty near Nairobi, while a health centre will be built in northern Kenya, according to information from Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's press office.

Archbishop Anthony Muheira, Gary Mueller, chancellor of the university and Tom Lalampaa, head of the Northern Rangelands Trust, thanked in a letter the Hungarian prime minister for the funds totalling some 85 million forints (EUR 236,000). Lalampaa said

that the health centre will directly improve the lives of women and children, the most vulnerable groups of Kenyan society.

NUMBER OF TELECOMMUTERS DOWN SINCE LOCKDOWN, BUT UP IN A YEAR

The rate of employed Hungarians who telecommute stood at 7.5% in July, down from around 17% in the spring, when the country was in pandemic lockdown, but nearly four times the rate in the same month a year earlier, data compiled by the Central Statistics Office (KSH) show. The rate of telecommuters was down from 16.7% in April and 17.2% in May. In July 2019, just 2.0% of employed Hungarians telecommuted. The data for July 2020 show 1.9% of employed Hungarians telecommuted all of the time, while 5.6% worked from home occasionally. The data also reveal big geographical differences in the rate of telecommuters: in Budapest, 21.2% of the employed worked from home in

July, while the rate was in the single digits for the rest of the country.

FIRMS CAPACITY UTILISATION FELL TO 55% IN APRIL - SURVEY

The capacity utilisation rate of companies fell from 78% on March 1 to 55% by April 23, when lockdown measure to counter the coronavirus pandemic were at their peak, the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (MKIK) Economic Research Institute (GVI) said, citing a survey of 2,891 domestic companies.

The survey found that the share of companies producing at 0% of their capacity, effectively suspending their operations, rose from 4% on March to 12% in April. Data showed that in April nearly half of domestic firms had sufficient equity for up to just 2 months and nearly two-thirds for up to 3 months to meet their financial claims at the level of capacity utilisation seen in April. The shares were similar for the availability of funds to keep employee numbers stable.

