

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Péter Komka

Fog in Nógrád County, northern Hungary

UPCOMING EVENTS

Presser on 2021 International Eucharistic Congress

Public health conference in Budapest

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

7,000 COVID TEST REQUESTS MADE EACH DAY

Fully 7,000 requests for coronavirus tests are received each day, the chief medical officer said, adding that while test delivery capacities needed to be increased, laboratories had sufficient means to evaluate the tests.

Now that the second wave of the virus has arrived, the focus should be on protecting the elderly and the chronically ill, Cecília Müller said at an online health conference, noting her recent instructions to restrict access and admissions to social care homes. Müller said that when a vaccine becomes available, it should first be given to frontline staff such as people working in health care and high-risk groups such as public employees on the front line and teachers. She also asked teachers to work only if they were completely healthy, adding that there had been many cases of teachers turning up at school even though they knew they had symptoms of the virus.

Müller noted the accumulation of knowledge about the virus during the first wave, adding that the authorities were monitoring the dynamics of the epidemic. But public-health and individual hygiene rules should be followed, including physical distancing, mask use and regular hand disinfection, she added. Müller said it was clear that the virus was being transmitted most by young people, so now there was a lower mortality rate.

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TWO DIE, REGISTERED CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS UP 411 IN HUNGARY

Two Covid-19 patients, both elderly and with underlying illnesses, have died, while the number of registered coronavirus infections in Hungary has risen by 411 to 9,715 over the past 24 hours, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Wednesday morning. The number of fatalities stands at 628, and 3,984 people have made a recovery. There are 5,103 active infections and 221 Covid-19 patients are being treated in hospital, 13 on ventilators. Altogether 23,461 people are in official home quarantine and 495,481 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 (4,260), followed by Pest County (1,404) and the counties of Fejér (575), Komárom-Esztergom (389), Hajdú-Bihar (347) and Zala (345). Békés County has the fewest infections (53).

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER ORDERS NATIONWIDE BAN ON HOSPITAL VISITS

Hungary's chief medical officer has ordered a nationwide ban on visits to

hospitals, the National Public Health Centre (NNK) said. The ban, in effect from Tuesday, applies to both public and private institutions, NNK told MTI. The restrictions do not apply in the cases of severely or terminally ill patients. Under the chief medical officer's resolution, one parent is also allowed to stay at the hospital with their child and women due to give birth may also choose someone to accompany them. Institutions found in violation of the ban face a fine of up to 5 million forints (EUR 14,000).

NÉMETH: HUNGARY SHOULD STAND BY BELARUSIAN PEOPLE

Zsolt Németh, the (Fidesz) chairman of parliament's foreign affairs committee, said that Hungary and its parliament should stand by the Belarusian people. After a committee meeting held behind closed doors, he told a press conference that the countries of central Europe, as former communist dictatorships, were following how the democratic movement was unfolding in Belarus with "heightened attention and compassion". He said it was expected of Western countries, the European Union and NATO, and member states of the Council of Europe that they should provide their full support to the democratic movement within Belarus, which "has a strong, broad and serious social base". Németh said the falsified election results, the brutal actions of the authorities subsequently and their

violent treatment of protesters and opposition leaders had caused outrage on the international stage.

"We, too, condemn these manifestations most strongly," he said, noting Hungarian support for initiatives by the EU, NATO, the OSCE and the Council of Europe as well as the Visegrad Group in the recent past. Hungary, he added, supports Poland's approach to the matter, adding that he was confident the initiative backed by 14 EU member states would keep up the pressure essential for resolving the situation in Belarus satisfactorily.

Németh called for all key political actors to engage in dialogue, adding that he supported a motion by Cheryl Gillan, head of the Council of Europe's political affairs committee, for the Council to play a mediating role. The Belarusian authorities, he said, had shown a degree of openness towards the constitutional process. Referring to earlier remarks by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, he said the EU must combine its diplomatic strategy with economic components, and a proposal by Olivér Várhelyi, the EU commissioner for neighbourhood policy, to provide 53 million euros of targeted aid to Belarus during the coronavirus epidemic should be acted on.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: NEW HUNGARY-MALTA ALLIANCE, AGREEMENT ON MIGRATION

Hungary and Malta have formed a new alliance based on identical

assessments of the problems facing the European Union and their concurrence on the issue of migration, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó told a press conference after talks with his Maltese counterpart in Valletta. "We agree that migration should be stopped rather than managed, especially in light of the coronavirus pandemic which has brought about new dangers [in Malta], too," Szijjártó said. Whereas migration had been a risk in terms of security and cultural clashes, it is now a "tremendous" health risk, too, he said, adding the Maltese foreign and EU minister and he were in agreement aiding developments in Africa so that living standards improve there was essential to persuading people in Africa to stay at home. "African countries need their young people, and Europe must make clear that entry to Europe can only be made legally," the minister said.

Szijjártó also referred to billionaire financier George Soros, saying "it is time to talk plainly about the role of Soros's NGOs in the Mediterranean". He accused such organisations of "blackmailing" Europeans regularly and forging alliances with human trafficking networks. He insisted that NGOs commit crimes by aiding migration because "illegal migration is itself a crime". "The time has come for Europe to put an end to blackmail by NGOs," Szijjártó said.

The minister said he and his Maltese counterpart agreed that spending on development and investments by the European Union should be

tied to the willingness and ability of African countries to stop the outflow of migrants. He noted that two-and-a-half years ago the Visegrad Group of countries had given the EU 35 million euros to strengthen the Libyan coast guard and to buy boats for the purpose, but, he added, Brussels had not bought any yet. The European Commission is now being asked to involve Malta in the procurement of 2-3 boats, he said.

DUNA MÉDIASZOLGÁLTATÓ BUYS HOLY CROWN OF HUNGARY REPLICA

Public service media operator Duna Médiaszolgáltató has purchased a replica of the Holy Crown of Hungary and other coronation regalia, and is putting the objects on display in the Duna House in Rimetea (Torockó) in Romania, the company's chief executive, Menyhért Dobos, said.

The replica has been made by Imre Panyik, an ethnic Hungarian ornamental locksmith from Slovakia, who studied the originals in Parliament for thousands of hours, Dobos told public news channel M1. It took two years to complete the replicas, and they are being placed in Duna House on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the post-WW1 Trianon Treaty, he added. They will be on display to members of the public before every performance at Duna House, which has a cultural mission to help the survival of ethnic Hungarians living in diasporas, he said.

SUPPORT FOR SOCIALISTS AT ALL-TIME LOW

Support for Hungary's opposition Socialist Party has sunk to an all-time low under the leadership of Bertalan Tóth, the daily Magyar Nemzet said. Citing a survey by Republikon, the paper said that Tóth's predecessor, Attila Mesterházy, had enjoyed a higher profile and greater popularity. But the current leadership has wound up its party organisation in Pest County, and this is how Tóth is hanging on to power, the paper said, adding that wiping Pest County delegates off the list ahead of the party's Sept. 19 congress would harm Mesterházy's chances of making a comeback. Currently Tóth and Ágnes Kunhalmi are running against Mesterházy on a joint ticket in a bid to co-lead the party.

HUNGARIAN ARMED FORCES TO RECEIVE DELIVERY OF LYNX INFANTRY FIGHTING VEHICLES

Hungary's Armed Forces will soon receive delivery of Lynx armoured fighting vehicles, thereby fulfilling its NATO obligations, a government official said. The office of Gáspár Maróth, the government commissioner for coordinating defence developments, told MTI that the contract for the purchase of Rheinmetall Lynx combat vehicles was signed by Ferenc Korom,

Commander of the Hungarian Armed Forces, and Armin Papperger, Chairman of the Board of the German company, in Budapest.

Under a 2 billion euro army modernisation programme, Hungary is taking delivery of 218 Lynx KF41 combat vehicles. Most of them, 172, will be produced in Hungary under a JV to be set up based on a recent agreement between Rheinmetall and the Hungarian state. The first 46 are being manufactured in Germany. The deal also involves the training of Hungarian specialists working at the domestic plant.

SUBURBAN RAILWAY NETWORK TO BE COMPLETELY OVERHAULED BY 2025

All suburban railway lines in and around Budapest (HÉV) will be upgraded and 54 brand new trains will be put into operation by 2025, a government official said. Balázs Fürjes, state secretary for the implementation of Budapest developments, told a press conference that as part of the development, the Csepel and Ráckeve lines will be extended underground

as far as downtown Kálvin Square, connecting the lines to metro lines 3 and 4. This section under Soroksári Road will divert trains away from the current surface lines near the National Theatre and the Palace of Arts, thereby providing unimpeded access to the Danube embankment there. The tracks, stops, control system and passenger information system will be upgraded, and connection points established with rail transport by 2027. A call for tenders for 54 vehicles will be released later this year, he added.

HEADLINE INFLATION 3.9% IN AUG

Hungary's annual consumer price index rose to 3.9% in August from 3.8% in July, boosted by higher food and tobacco prices, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. Food prices increased by 7.9% and the price of spirits and tobacco were up 6.8%. Harmonised for better comparison with other European Union member states, CPI stood at 4%. Core inflation, which excludes volatile fuel and food prices, was 4.7%. The inflation rate calculated using a basket of goods and services used by pensioners reached 4.3%.

BUDGET SHORTFALL HUF 2,261 BN AT END-AUGUST

Hungary's budget deficit, excluding local councils, came to 2,261.3 billion forints at the end of August, widened by pandemic defence spending, economic stimulus and pre-financing for European Union-funded projects, the finance ministry said in a preliminary release. The ministry said spending on pandemic defence, such as acquisitions of personal protective equipment and ventilators, came to more than 553 billion forints by the end of August. It said that payouts for EU-funded projects exceeded 1,374 billion forints by the end of August, while transfers from Brussels came to 772.4 billion, with 283 billion transferred in August alone. The government has been pre-financing EU-funded projects for years to avoid backups and ensure all available monies are used up. The central budget ran a 1,873.1 billion forint deficit; separate state funds were 2.3 billion in the red, while the shortfall in social insurance funds was 385.9 billion.

