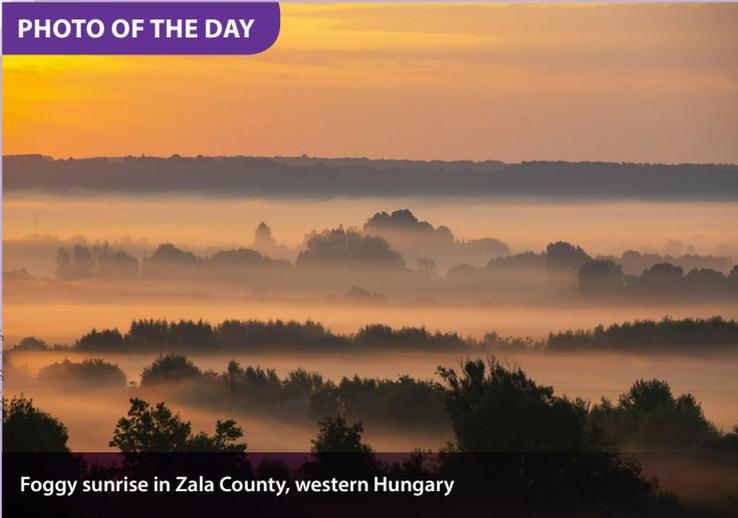


PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/György Varga

Foggy sunrise in Zala County, western Hungary

UPCOMING EVENTS

Coronavirus updates

Hungary Foreign Minister holds talks with Kyrgyz counterpart

NBH releases Sept 2020 Trends in Lending report

TOP STORY

GOVT CAPS COVID TEST PRICE

The government has capped the price of coronavirus tests at 19,500 forints (EUR 54) and decided that clubs will have to close by 11pm to curb the spread of the virus, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said on Facebook.

Restrictions on entry imposed from Sept. 1 will remain in place and wearing a face mask will be made mandatory in public transport, in cinemas, theatres, health and social institutions and public offices, Orbán said after a cabinet meeting. The blanket visiting ban for hospitals and retirement homes will also remain in place, he added. Concerning schools, the prime minister said that from Oct. 1, only teachers and students will be allowed into school buildings and will be required to undergo temperature screening upon entry.

Citing epidemiologists, the prime minister said the second wave of the epidemic was expected to peak around December or January, adding that Hungary would have to keep up protection efforts until then. "We have a strategy that centres on protecting the elderly and treating those who are ill while making sure that the country is able to function," he said.

Orbán asked the public to observe the regulations and said that he has instructed the interior minister to monitor compliance with the rules and penalise those who violate them.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY TO BACK US MIDDLE EAST POLICY IN EU FORUMS

Hungary will promote US Middle East policy in the European Union, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Facebook after meeting President Donald Trump and Jared Kushner in Washington, DC, on Tuesday. Szijjártó was the only EU foreign minister to attend the signing ceremony of the peace agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

Referring to previous talks with energy secretary Dan Brouillette, the minister noted: "Hungary's natural gas will be supplied amid new circumstances from the start of next year with the construction of an LNG terminal in Croatia and a gas purchase agreement with a non-Russian company." Shell will be supplying 250 million cubic meters of gas to Hungary each year for the next six years, he added. Hungary has already hooked up its gas pipeline network to those of six out of seven of its neighbouring countries. A connection with Slovenia has yet to be established, he added.

EIGHT DIE, REGISTERED CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS UP 581 IN HUNGARY

Eight Covid-19 patients, all suffering from underlying illnesses, have died in the past 24 hours, while the number of registered coronavirus

infections in Hungary has risen by 581 to 14,460, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Wednesday morning. The number of fatalities stands at 654, and 4,153 people have made a recovery. There are 9,653 active infections and 324 Covid-19 patients are being treated in hospital, 18 on ventilators. Altogether 29,005 people are in official home quarantine and 567,691 tests have been carried out. The website 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. The Budapest municipality tightened regulations on mask-wearing in public places and introduced fines for violators and establishment owners. Most infections have been registered in Budapest (6,202), followed by Pest County (2,031) and the counties of Fejér (799), Hajdú-Bihar (532), Győr-Moson-Sopron (523), and Komárom-Esztergom (502). Békés County has the fewest infections (90).

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY RESPECTED IN WHITE HOUSE

Hungary, the Hungarian government and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán are regarded with respect, appreciation and support in the White House, the foreign minister said in a Facebook entry on Tuesday evening, after a ceremony. Péter Szijjártó was the only

EU foreign minister to attend there the signing of Israel's agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain on normalising diplomatic ties, a document he earlier called "historic". He said that two agreements were signed that could open "a whole new chapter" in history, replacing war and terrorism with peace. Szijjártó called this all the more important because security in the Middle East has an impact on Europe's security. The accord brokered by US President Donald Trump would mandate a Nobel Peace Prize to be granted to him, Szijjártó said.

During his visit, the Hungarian foreign minister held talks with National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien and White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows. Szijjártó said that Hungarian-US relations are at their peak. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Donald Trump both speak clearly and honestly about their own vision and neither of them can be accused of hypocrisy, he said, adding that this created the basis for their excellent cooperation. In addition, they both take a firm stand against illegal migration, think similarly about protecting Christian communities and supporting families, and agree on world policy issues. Szijjártó also signed an agreement between the Hungarian government and the largest privately held space research company listed on the stock exchange. Concerning energy issues, Szijjártó said Hungary's recently concluded long-term gas purchase

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agreement with Shell won general acclaim in Washington. The foreign minister met David B. Cornstein, the outgoing ambassador of the United States to Hungary, who is returning to his home country in November. As regards Hungary's next ambassador to Washington, Sziijártó said that he had proposed for the post Szabolcs Takács, the foreign ministry's commissioner for Brexit, which Prime Minister Viktor Orbán had approved.

ORBÁN CONGRATULATES JAPANESE PM ON ELECTION

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has sent a congratulatory letter to Yoshihide Suga on his election as the head of the Japanese government. Suga was elected by the ruling conservative Liberal Democratic party after his predecessor, Shindzo Abe, resigned citing health reasons. In his letter, Orbán praised Hungarian-Japanese strategic cooperation and invited Suga to visit Budapest. Orbán said he was proud that "through years of work, our countries' long-term friendship has developed into strategic cooperation which is comprehensive and successful." He noted the celebrations of 150 years of diplomatic ties between Hungary and Japan, which he attended in person last October. The groundwork is laid for Hungarian-Japanese relations to develop further based on mutual respect and trust, Orbán said. "I am happy to work with a seasoned and

capable leader who is also committed to conservative values," Orbán wrote. Orbán invited Suga for an official visit to Hungary, saying he hoped to "welcome a Japanese prime minister to Hungary after a thirty-year hiatus". He wished Japan success in hosting the Olympic Games in Tokyo in 2021, which had been postponed from this year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: PRESERVING NATIONAL IDENTITY KEY FOR EUROPE IN TACKLING CHALLENGES

Europe will be capable of tackling the challenges it is facing only by preserving national identities and its cultural, historic and religious traditions, the Hungarian foreign minister said after talks in San Marino with Luca Beccari, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Unfortunately, there are tendencies and aspirations that go against the efforts aimed at preserving national identities and traditions, Sziijártó told MTI. "This is why Hungary wants to see a cooperation of European countries that are sensitive to their national identity and are equally proud of their religious, historical and cultural heritage. San Marino is such a country," he said.

Strengthening political and economic cooperation, and concluding an association agreement between the EU and San Marino within the shortest possible period of time is an important goal and vital interest, Sziijártó said. The minister said that

bilateral cooperation would be built on education. In this framework, Hungary will offer ten scholarships for students from San Marino to study at a Hungarian university each year starting in 2021. In addition, talks on an investment protection agreement between the two countries will begin immediately, he said.

MEDIA AUTHORITY'S CASE AGAINST TELENOR ON NET NEUTRALITY UPHELD BY EU COURT

The European Union's highest court has confirmed the national media authority's (NMHH) legal interpretation of EU rules concerning net neutrality following a Hungarian court's request for guidance from the Luxembourg court over a case involving Telenor Magyarország, the NMHH said. The EU Court of Justice interpreted the regulation in question for the first time, ruling that mobile operators favouring some apps over others when setting their tariffs violate the principle of net neutrality. Telenor had offered customers zero-tariff packages in which certain applications were deducted from the consumption tally. Blocking or slowing down traffic for certain types of application is seen as a violation of that principle. Hungary's media and telecoms watchdog had argued in its suit that Telenor's package breached the net neutrality regulation that ISPs may not discriminate between the internet content they make available.

The NMHH said that it welcomed the EU court ruling and it was confident that, accordingly, proceedings Telenor brought before the Metropolitan Court may soon be concluded. The EU court's decision sets a precedent for the Hungarian court and the courts of other EU member states in the event that a similar case emerges, the authority noted. The NMHH noted that in 2017 the authority ordered Telenor to cease differentiating between data packages and favouring MyChat and MyMusic apps on a purely commercial basis by applying zero charging. Telenor filed two lawsuits at the Hungarian court challenging the media authority's decision.

FIDESZ MEP: TIME FOR EU TO END 'COLD WAR' AGAINST MEMBER STATES

In order to heal the debilitating divisions characterising the European Union, the bloc must end its "political and ideological cold war" against member states, Fidesz MEP Tamás Deutsch said in a plenary session of the European Parliament in Brussels. Speaking after an address by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Deutsch said the EU had lost its leading role in the world and called for an end to the use of double standards against member states. To heal what he called "institutional divisions" within the

bloc, Deutsch said the EC should ensure that all EU citizens are able to exercise their right to take up work in other member states. The commission must also draft proposals aimed at eliminating laws that discriminate against central and eastern European businesses, Deutsch said, citing measures affecting the road haulage sector.

PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE CHARGES FOUR PEOPLE WITH FRAUD, AFTER OLAF RECOMMENDATION

Four people have been charged with budgetary fraud and using falsified documents, among other crimes, following the recommendations of OLAF, the European Union's anti-corruption body, the Hungarian Prosecutor's Office said. OLAF's recommendations concerned a public procurement tender under the auspices of Hungary's National Development Agency, the statement said. Imre Keresztes, head of the investigative body within the prosecutor's office, said a contractor to the project had procured falsified invoices, defrauding the state of some 84 million forints (EUR 234,000) in VAT and corporate taxes between 2011 and 2013. The prosecutors have asked for prison sentences for the manager and one accomplice, and suspended prison sentences for another two, the statement said.

PALKOVICS: PHONE APPS 'ESSENTIAL' FOR EFFECTIVE CONTACT TRACING

A phone app developed by the government called Virusradar may be instrumental in saving lives during the second wave of the coronavirus epidemic, László Palkovics, the minister for innovation and technology, said. So far, 35,000 people have downloaded the application, which is currently available for Android operating systems, Palkovics said. The app uses the phone's bluetooth connection to identify the phones that spend at least 15 minutes within a two-metre radius from it. The phone's owner later can decide whether to share that information with the authorities. Younger people tend to be the main spreaders of the infection at present, and the app should play a more important role now than in the spring, he said at a press conference, urging as many people as possible to download it.

Government spokeswoman Alexandra Szentkirályi said people under the age of 40 get out of the house and meet more often, so effective contact tracing is essential. In the government's National Consultation public survey on the epidemic, over 2 million people said they did not want to return to a severe lockdown, Szentkirályi noted. The government is working to save people's lives and health without

shutting down the economy again, she said.

US AMBASSADOR CORNSTEIN TO CONCLUDE OFFICE TERM

David B. Cornstein, the US Ambassador to Hungary, announced on Tuesday evening that he is concluding his service effective November 1. In his announcement posted on the US Embassy's home page, the ambassador said that "it has been an honor and a privilege to serve the country that I love in a country that I have come to cherish". He said that US-Hungarian relationship "is more than just one person". Cornstein said that working with the entire team at the embassy, both Americans and Hungarians, he is proud of how much has been "accomplished together in strengthening our countries' bonds as allies". "While I will miss Hungary and all the wonderful friends and memories I have made here, my Embassy team, Hungary, and the Hungarian people will always remain in my heart," the ambassador said. Cornstein was confirmed by the US Senate on May

24, 2018 and presented his credentials to Hungarian President János Áder on June 25, 2018.

SZEGED COURT HANDS GERMAN CITIZEN LIFE SENTENCE FOR MURDER IN S HUNGARY

A Szeged appeals court upheld the ruling of a local court and handed in a binding ruling a life sentence to a German citizen of Turkish origin who had shot an acquaintance and seriously injured another man three years ago in southern Hungary. The defendant, aged 55, helped the victim, a Bulgarian national also of Turkish origin, with moving to Austria and finding job, and lent him money several years ago, the court said. But as the man had not paid the loan back, the defendant decided to kill him. The murder took place in a parking lot on motorway M5 near the village of Csengele on December 4, 2017.

The defendant shot with an illegally possessed gun five times the victim who was parking his car and seriously wounded with two shots another passenger travelling in the victim's

car. The passenger, an Austrian national, was taken to hospital with life threatening injuries, where his life was saved. The culprit was arrested by a special police force the next day. He can be released on parole after 30 years at the earliest.

SECURITY ADVISOR: 100-150 MIGRANTS TRY TO ENTER HUNGARY ILLEGALLY EACH DAY

Some 100-150 illegal migrants attempt to enter Hungary illegally each day, the prime minister's security advisor said. Authorities have thwarted 22,000 attempts to cross the border illegally this year alone, more than in the past three years combined, György Bakondi said. Almost 300 people are in the process of being prosecuted for people smuggling, he said. Methods to get past the border include cutting through the fence, scaling it or digging under it, Bakondi said. Migrants are "keeping the border under permanent pressure," Bakondi said, adding that "politically motivated attacks" on the Hungarian government's border policy only worsened the situation.