

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zsolt Czeglédi

V-Híd Építő inaugurates modern railway construction line

UPCOMING EVENTS

Coronavirus update

By-elections in six localities

DK holds online campaign launching event

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: HUNGARY MUST FUNCTION

Hungary must be able to function while mounting a disciplined defence against the novel coronavirus pandemic, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in a regular interview with public broadcaster Kossuth Rádió.

The government has a strategy for dealing with a potential surge in coronavirus cases and a need for increased hospital capacities, the prime minister said. Orbán paid a visit to the institution on Friday morning where he was told that the hospital has a sufficient number of ventilators, beds and staff. He added, at the same time, that doctors were aware of the rise in coronavirus patients in need of hospital treatment and the number of people the institutions can admit. Hospitals have around 10,000 beds available to treat coronavirus patients and this can be expanded by 20,000, the prime minister said. Now that the health-care sector has been equipped to deal with the second wave of the pandemic, Hungary's defence will be different than it was during the first wave in the spring, Orbán said. Therefore this time the government is not asking people to stay at home, but rather to simply observe social distancing guidelines and hygiene regulations, he said. As regards the second wave of the pandemic, Orbán said the autumn would be "all about defence" and the daily infection rate was likely to exceed 1,000. He urged young people to also be cautious so as to prevent infecting their parents and grandparents.

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ORBÁN: OPERATIVE BOARD TO DECIDE ON MORATORIUMS ON SAT

Orbán said the operative board coordinating the response to the coronavirus crisis will make a decision on the future of a moratorium on loan repayments for businesses and households at a meeting on Saturday. The automatic opt-in moratorium, among the first measures the government took in the spring to ease the economic fallout from the coronavirus crisis, is set to expire at the end of the year. "January 1 is coming soon, and what will happen afterward? We have to take a decision on that now, on whether to continue the repayment moratorium and on what parts to continue," Orbán said. Commenting on economic figures, he said that 4.458 million people were employed in January and 4.513 million in August. Compared to the low point in April, there were 144,000 more jobholders in August, so "rather surprisingly, a labour shortage should be expected again", he added. Orbán said it was a special problem in Budapest that the city's tourism model was based almost entirely on foreigners. He called on the participants, including the municipality, to change this because otherwise people working in the sector will not have jobs.

He said he expected the boom in domestic tourism to remain in 2021 and Budapest tourism based on foreigners to still suffer, which is why a special programme is needed for the capital.

Addressing the left-wing opposition parties, Orbán said that "if they can't be counted on" they should "at least refrain from attacking epidemiologists", arguing that doing so constituted an "attack on the country". He said claims that there were not enough hospitals, doctors and ventilators to treat patients were "all lies and attacks". The prime minister said that if the left urged people to observe the rules related to the pandemic and focused on dispelling people's fears, the media would likely be less focused on publishing "sensationalist" stories on health care.

Orbán said protective measures were needed until a vaccine was available. He added that during recent talks, US President Donald Trump told him that a vaccine would be available in the US possibly by the end of October but no later than the end of the year, and Hungary would have access to it. "We will believe it when we see it," Orbán said. The government is keeping an eye out on all ongoing research projects and Hungary is participating in a European project with over 2 billion forints (EUR 5.55m) extra contribution allocated for it, he added.

SIX DIE, REGISTERED CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS UP BY 941 IN HUNGARY

Six 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 941 to 16,111, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Friday morning. The number of fatalities stands at 669, and 4,240 people have made a recovery. There are 11,202 active infections and 374 Covid-19 patients are being treated in hospital, 29 on ventilators. Altogether 27,866 people are in official home quarantine and 591,618 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. A cabinet meeting on September 16 decided to extend entry restrictions for travellers from abroad. In addition to shops and public transport, mask-wearing will be made mandatory in cinemas, theatres, health and social institutions and public offices, and clubs will have to close by 11pm to curb the spread of the virus. Most infections have been registered in Budapest (6,822), followed by Pest County (2,225) and the counties of Fejér

(818), Győr-Moson-Sopron (622), Hajdú-Bihar (614), and Csongrád-Csanád (587). Békés County has the fewest infections (111).

FIDESZ MEP: EP APPROVES FRAMEWORK ON ROMA INTEGRATION

The European Parliament has approved the report on the Framework for National Roma Integration, laying the groundwork for integration measures proposed by Hungary to be developed further, an MEP of ruling Fidesz said. Lívia Járóka said the basic aims of the integration of Roma had been thrown into sharp relief by the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic. The goals include improving the quality of education and creating jobs, she added. The document outlines the measures to be taken over the next ten years, strengthens control mechanisms and promotes a comprehensive approach to relevant policies, Járóka said. It proposes to develop the existing institutional and financial structure and emphasises the importance of developing the Balkan states, she added. Járóka, who is also the EP's vice-president responsible for relations with the Western Balkan states, welcomed that the report looked beyond the EU's current borders and said the European Commission and enlargement commissioner Oliver Várhelyi were committed to the cause. She called on the member states to use the EP's guidelines to develop their

own strategies and ensure a "full and happy life free from discrimination for all European Roma".

KARÁCSONY GREETES BUDAPEST JEWISH COMMUNITY ON JEWISH NEW YEAR

Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony greeted the city's Jewish community on the occasion of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year. The development, culture and traditions of the Hungarian capital are inseparable from Jewish culture and the efforts and talents of the Jewish people, Karácsony said. "Rosh Hashanah is a celebration of the birth of the world that reminds us of the special relationship between God and His children," the mayor wrote. "Our belief in a better world is perhaps more needed now than at any other time over the past decades." The universal threat posed by the novel coronavirus pandemic, if addressed correctly, could help make the world a tighter-knit community irrespective of religion, nationality or skin colour, the mayor said. It is in everyone's interest that people lend each other a helping hand in times of trouble instead of being hostile, he added. "Budapest is a diverse major city that is home to communities of many religions and cultures," Karácsony wrote. He urged people not to forget about the poor and those facing social exclusion and loneliness.

RÉTVÁRI: OVER 200 NEW SUBSTANCES ADDED TO LIST OF BANNED DESIGNER DRUGS

Over 200 new substances were added this summer to the list of banned psychoactive drugs, the deputy leader of the co-ruling Christian Democrats said. The majority of the new substances have not yet arrived in Hungary but their presence in several European countries called for precautionary measures, Bence Rétvári said. In line with Hungarian regulations in force since 2015, generic bans based on chemical structure are in force which enables automatically making punishable any future variations of designer drugs, he said. He added that the spread of drugs primarily posed a threat to young people and it was therefore especially important that the amended national curriculum made drug prevention a mandatory element of several subjects being taught at schools.

GOVT OFFICIAL: HUNGARY, ROMANIA RELATIONS ALLOW WORK FOR HUNGARIAN MINORITIES

Relations between Hungary and Romania are "civil and fair", which allows the Hungarian government to work for the ethnic Hungarians living in Romania, a government

official told the Cluj daily *Krónika*. In the interview, János Árpád Potápi touched on the upcoming local elections in Romania, and said Hungarians needed strong representation. He said the ethnic Hungarian RMDSZ party was the Hungarian government's "strategic ally, we support them because they are the strongest". He said that hopefully, RMDSZ will soon be a member of the Romanian coalition government. Potápi said fielding Hungarian candidates in non-Hungarian parties harmed the interests of the Hungarian community.

Regarding remarks of President Klaus Iohannis, who insisted the Romanian opposition was "trying to sell out Transylvania to Hungary", Potápi said that Iohannis had been voted into position by Hungarians living in Romania. So far, the president has not returned the support, Potápi said.

On the issue of Ukraine refusing to allow Potápi to enter the country, the state secretary warned that minorities in Ukraine will soon have "less rights than they used to have in the Soviet Union". "How do they expect Ukrainian citizens to remain faithful to an independent Ukraine like that? While they force Ukrainian on ethnic

minorities, government members in Kiev use Russian amongst themselves," Potápi added. He said Hungary would continue to block Ukraine's attempts to join NATO until the issue is solved.

GOVT OFFICIAL: W HUNGARY DEVELOPMENTS AID SURVIVAL OF SLOVENIAN MINORITY

Developments supported by the government in the Rába region in western Hungary will aid the survival of the country's Slovenian minority and strengthen their identity and culture, the state secretary for church and ethnic relations said. Speaking in the village of Apátistvánfalva, in western Hungary, Miklós Soltész said the novel coronavirus epidemic had not stopped the government from moving forward with development projects it has started in the region. These projects include an upgrade of the Apátistvánfalva school's gym, to which the government is contributing 40 million forints (EUR 111,000), he said. Also, the government has spent 160 million forints on the implementation of the first phase of an economic development scheme in the villages of Órfalu, Szakonyfalu, Felsőszölnök and Kétvölgy, he added.

HOLLIK: LEFT REMAIN UNRELIABLE IN FIGHT AGAINST EPIDEMIC

Hungary's left-wing opposition has again demonstrated that it cannot be relied on in the fight against the novel coronavirus epidemic, the communications director of ruling Fidesz said. István Hollik told a press conference that politicians of the opposition Democratic Coalition and the Socialists were participating in "spreading fake news" about hospitals not having enough ventilators or staff trained to use them. "While the entire left wing is busy hindering protection efforts against the epidemic and spreading fake news, thousands of epidemiological, health and law enforcement experts have been working to prepare the health-care system for a second wave of the epidemic and making sure that all personnel and material conditions are set to provide the necessary hospital services to those in need," he said. The left wing has been continually attacking the government's protective measures and refused to approve in parliament the financial resources necessary to pay for them, he added.