

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Tamas Vasvari

Mi-24 army helicopter in Brave Warrior 2020 military exercise in W Hungary

UPCOMING EVENTS

Foreign minister in talks with Austria EU minister

Agriculture minister addresses European horticulture festival

Coronavirus updates

KSH releases migration data for Jan-July

TOP STORY

ORBÁN OPPOSES 'REBRANDED' MIGRANT QUOTA

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has said Hungary continues to oppose the migrant quota, even if the European Commission's new migration and refugee package presented on Wednesday uses a different term for it.

Orbán, along with prime ministers Mateusz Morawiecki of Poland and Andrej Babiš of the Czech Republic, held a ninety minute meeting with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Thursday, after which the three prime ministers held a joint press conference in Poland's EU embassy in Brussels. Orbán said the tone of the EC's new proposals had improved compared with previous iterations, but the EC's basic approach had not changed and did not amount to a breakthrough. A real breakthrough would require the EC to approve the Hungarian proposal that no one should be allowed to enter the territory of the European Union unless a member state has concluded the related legal procedure and given its consent.

Meanwhile, Balázs Hidvéghi, an MEP of the ruling Fidesz party, said the commission president's Ursula announcement of the new EU migration package provided grounds for "cautious optimism", adding, however, that Fidesz would review the proposal in greater detail.

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FIDESZ 'CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC' ON NEW EU MIGRATION PACT

Speaking to public broadcaster Kossuth Rádió, Fidesz MEP Balázs Hidvéghi said the specific proposals presented by the EC president on Wednesday signalled a noticeable shift away from former EC chief Jean-Claude Juncker's approach to migration. The new package puts greater emphasis on protecting the bloc's external borders and explicitly states that member states will not be mandated to take in migrants but will instead be allowed to demonstrate solidarity through other means, he said. Hungary contributes to European solidarity by protecting the EU's external borders, Hidvéghi said. Member states that protect the external borders should not be held responsible for the other member states' failure to do so, he argued. "We're in need of a paradigm shift," Hidvéghi said. "The world must understand that you can't enter Europe unchecked, that human smuggling must be stopped and that we must end the practice of allowing those who have entered to stay here." The MEP also underlined the need to accept that EU member states have the right to form their own stance on the issue of migration and that no position could be forced onto anyone else. The new migration pact recognising this would be a "significant step forward", Hidvéghi said, adding that such a principle would allow member states to address the migration issue in a

variety of ways. Hungary, for instance, contributes to the protection of the bloc's borders, aids troubled regions and is also prepared to help with deportations, he said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: GLOBAL TECH FIRMS PUTTING TRUST IN HUNGARY

Global companies using cutting-edge technology are putting their trust in Hungary, its investment environment and the Hungarian people, Foreign Minister Péter Sziijártó said at the official opening of the Continental test track in Veszprém, in western Hungary. Continental will be the largest vehicle dynamics test track in central Europe, he said. The government has contributed 1.46 billion forints (EUR 4m) to the 9.7 billion forint investment project, which will create 130 new jobs, he added. The project will boost Continental's international competitiveness and Hungary's position as a focus country, he said. The test track project is all the more important because a "sharp competition with much at stake" has started globally for the redistribution of capacities in the aftermath of the novel coronavirus pandemic, he added.

Sziijártó said the car industry had always been a flagship of the Hungarian economy. At present it accounts for 30% of the country's industrial output. Its production value grew by a record-high 12% to 9,500 billion forints in 2019, and in the first seven months of this year 90% of its

output was exported, he added. Sziijártó said that the pandemic has not decreased Hungary's competitiveness on the global market, he added. German companies have always played an important role in the Hungarian economy and Continental provides 8,000 families' livelihood, he said. A quarter of foreign investment in Hungary originates in Germany, with 6,000 companies offering jobs to 300,000 Hungarians, he added. The government is negotiating with 24 German companies about further investment projects, he said.

SEVEN DIE, REGISTERED INFECTIONS UP 750 IN HUNGARY

Seven Covid-19 patients, all elderly and suffering from an underlying illness, have died in the past 24 hours, while the number of registered coronavirus infections in Hungary has risen by 750 to 21,200, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Thursday morning. The number of fatalities stands at 709, and 4,818 people have made a recovery. There are 15,673 active infections and 549 Covid-19 patients are being treated in hospital, 32 on ventilators. Altogether 27,403 people are in official home quarantine and 657,437 tests have been carried out. The website warned Hungarians to observe social distancing guidelines and hygiene regulations. A cabinet meeting on Sept. 16 decided to extend entry restrictions for travellers from abroad. In addition to shops and public transport, wearing a mask is

now mandatory in cinemas, theatres, health and social institutions and public offices, and clubs have to close by 11pm to curb the spread of the virus. The operative body responsible for handling the epidemic response has so far ordered 9 schools to revert to digital education. Fully 200 classes in otherwise operating schools have also been ordered to work from home, and 24 kindergartens and 8 schools have gone on emergency breaks, the website said. Most infections have been registered in Budapest (8,337), followed by Pest County (2,883) and the counties of Fejér (1,026), Csongrád-Csanád (944), Győr-Moson-Sopron (937), Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (840) and Hajdú-Bihar (834). Tolna County has the fewest infections (225).

ORBÁN, PINTÉR VISIT BUDAPEST'S ST LÁSZLÓ HOSPITAL

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Interior Minister Sándor Pintér visited the St. László Hospital in Budapest to obtain information about preparations for receiving coronavirus patients there. In a video posted on Facebook, Orbán talked to the head physician, who said the number of out-patients was "manageable" but there were a lot of people coming in to be tested for coronavirus. Orbán inspected the hospital tents set up in the courtyard. Another physician told him that the hospital hoped to increase the number of beds available for Covid-19 patients to 180 from 140.

CORONAVIRUS - DK SUBMITS REFERENDUM BID ON FREE TESTING

The opposition Democratic Coalition submitted a referendum initiative to the National Election Office (NVI) on making coronavirus tests free of charge. Coronavirus tests now cost people 20,000 forints (EUR 55), DK managing director László Sebián-Petrovszki told a press conference. But their social security contributions and taxes should already cover the cost.

Hungary has procured millions of testing kits but they are "kept locked away", he said. "There's nothing more important right now than identifying cases, and the only way to do that is by testing, testing, testing," Sebián-Petrovszki said.

Asked if his party's referendum initiative reflected a "concern for society" or if it was a "political stunt", Sebián-Petrovszki said DK and the other opposition parties had been demanding free virus testing for weeks, adding that the referendum bid had been the next step. Asked why DK wanted to provide free tests for other EU citizens residing in Hungary, he said the virus "doesn't recognise borders". And queried about the party's insistence that people without symptoms should also be tested when general practitioners can order a Covid test if a patient shows a single symptom of the virus, the politician said it was a misconception that asymptomatic patients did not spread the virus.

Ruling Fidesz said in reaction that "after spreading fake news, the left now wants a fake referendum". "The left is well aware that when [coronavirus] tests are ordered by a GP, a hospital or an authority on the basis of the relevant protocol, they are free of charge," Fidesz said in a statement. More than 650,000 PCR tests have been carried out so far, in line with international standards, the vast majority of them funded by the state, the party added. "It looks like the left just does not know when to give up," the statement said. "They still refuse to participate in the national fight against the virus and are instead preoccupied with hampering the defence against the epidemic and attacking epidemiological and health experts."

GERMANY DECLARES NW HUNGARY COUNTY 'HIGH- RISK REGION'

Germany has declared Győr-Moson-Sopron County, in northwest Hungary, a high-risk region due to the spread of the novel coronavirus there. Travellers from high-risk regions into Germany are required to self-quarantine and notify the authorities, and submit to a coronavirus test within 72 hours after arrival. The public health authority may lift the quarantine if the test result is negative. After Budapest, Győr-Moson-Sopron is the second Hungarian region to be declared high-risk by Germany. Germany updated its list of high-risk areas late on Wednesday. Among others,

nearly the whole of the Czech Republic and Covasna (Kovászna) county in central Romania were included in the list.

INTL COOPERATION IN FOCUS AT FOUR-NATION MILITARY EXERCISE

The international military exercise dubbed Brave Warrior 2020 under way in the Bakony hills, in western Hungary, is focused on international military cooperation, the deputy commander of the HDF 25th Klapka György Infantry Regiment said. The exercise involves 1,500 soldiers comprising Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak and US units, along with 500 military vehicles, Colonel Bálint Legoza said at a demonstration event. The exercise, which began in early September and is scheduled to conclude on Friday, serves to prepare the troops involved for the NATO combat readiness evaluation, he said.

NEW VOLNER PARTY SEEKS TO REPRESENT MIDDLE CLASS

The recently established Volner Party will aim to broaden the Hungarian middle class, János Volner, the founder and leader of the party, said. Independent lawmaker Volner, a one-time lawmaker of the opposition nationalist Jobbik party, announced the formation of his party last weekend. Speaking at a press conference, Volner said: "Only the members of the middle class will be able to elevate the country and make it prosper".

"Grandfathers and grandmothers voting for the left should be aware that the left wing today represents the interests of homosexuals and billionaires," Volner said. "Politicians on the left want to allow gay men to promote the homosexual lifestyle in compulsory school classes for their grandchildren and adopt boys and girls of the same age as their grandchildren".

Volner said that anyone who votes for left wing parties would be supporting billionaire businessmen who represent the interests of multinationals, such as former prime ministers Péter Medgyessy, Ferenc Gyurcsány and Gordon Bajnai.

"The Volner Party, a party of normal values, rejects those aspirations," he said.

PALKOVICS: CONSTRUCTION OF HUNGARY'S SOUTHERNMOST DANUBE BRIDGE COULD START IN TWO YEARS

The plans of a bridge over the Danube at Mohács, in southern Hungary, are expected to be completed in the first half of next year and construction could start in 18 months or two years once the public procurement tender is successfully concluded, the minister of innovation and development said. The four-lane bridge will be part of the M9 motorway crossing Hungary's western, southern and eastern areas, he told a press conference. Palkovics said preparations for the project would cost 1.3 billion forints (EUR 3.6m).

FORMER JOBBIK MEP ACQUITTED OF ESPIONAGE, SENTENCED ON FRAUD CHARGES

Béla Kovács, a former Jobbik MEP, has been acquitted of charges of espionage but sentenced to a suspended prison term of 18 months and fined 600,000 forints (EUR 1,640) for defrauding the EP budget, the Greater Budapest Court said. The Constitutional Protection Office, Hungary's internal security intelligence agency, filed a report against Kovács in April 2014 after it was revealed by the civil national security services that he had regularly met Russian diplomats and paid monthly visits to Moscow. The European Parliament lifted his immunity in October 2015. Charges were raised in early December of that year on suspicion that he had spied against EU institutions for Russia between 2012 and 2014. In 2017, the EP lifted his immunity in connection with another case. Hungary's chief prosecutor Péter Polt requested the procedure citing information from the EU's anti-fraud office OLAF, which suggested that between 2012 and 2013, Kovács hired four interns who never turned up in Brussels. The EP then merged the two investigations. In the same year, he was charged by the Hungarian prosecutor with budgetary fraud, as well as betrayal of public trust. The MEP has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing.

ARMED FORCES, WIZZ AIR SIGN COOPERATION PACT ON PERSONNEL TRAINING

Hungarian low-cost carrier Wizz Air has signed a cooperation agreement with the Hungarian Armed Forces on the training of pilots and flight attendants.

Under the agreement, flight personnel will receive training at Wizz Air's Budapest training venues and the airline will have permission to divert its flights to the Kecskemét air base in central Hungary if they are unable to land in Budapest. Addressing a press conference before the signing of the agreement, Wizz Air CEO József Váradi said the Armed Forces had made significant developments to the air force in recent years while Wizz Air had put considerable effort into training its staff. Nándor Kilián, inspector of the Hungarian Air Force, said the agreement would also be financially beneficial as Hungarian pilots and flight attendants would now be trained in Hungary rather than abroad. He said some 20-30 people were expected to take part in the training programme.

BORDER VIOLATORS FOUND HIDING IN ROMANIAN LORRY

Hungarian and Romanian police found twenty-one border violators hiding in a lorry with Romanian licence plates at the motorway border crossing of Csanádpalota, in SE Hungary, on Thursday morning, a spokesperson of the Csongrád-Csanád police said. Hungarian and Romanian police jointly inspected the lorry as it was crossing the border at 2.15am and found the men and women hiding behind the cargo. According to how the passengers identified themselves, the group included three Bangladeshi, three Syrian, seven Iraqi, four Sri Lankan, two Iranian and two Afghan citizens. The Romanian authorities filed proceedings against the Romanian driver for human smuggling and against the passengers for illegal border crossing.

TRIANON 100 - POTÁPI ADDRESSES CENTENARY CONFERENCE

One hundred years ago, the great powers sought to prevent Hungary from having a future by drawing up and signing the Trianon Peace Treaty, a

government official told a conference marking the treaty's centenary in Budapest. But present-day Hungary is proof that their efforts failed, state secretary Árpád János Potápi told the event held at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The groundwork for the Hungarian government's policy for ethnic Hungarians abroad was laid in 1990 by the prime minister of the time, József Antall, who said that he wanted "in spirit" to be the prime minister of 15 million Hungarians, Potápi said.

WORLD'S SMALLEST RUBIK'S CUBE PRESENTED IN JAPAN

The world's smallest Rubik's Cube was presented to the public in Japan on Wednesday, marking the 40th anniversary of the Hungarian-developed 3D combination puzzle in the country. The cube is 9.9mm on the edges and weighs about 2 grams. It was developed by toy maker MegaHouse Corp and the Iriso Seimitsu machining company. The miniature toy was displayed at an exhibition dedicated to the cube, designed by Hungarian inventor Ernő Rubik. The memorial Rubik's Cube is being sold for 198,000 yens (EUR 1,600).