

PHOTO OF THE DAY



The inauguration of a National Cultural Institute in C Hungary

MTI/Sándor Ulvári

UPCOMING EVENTS

Coronavirus updates

Plenary session of parliament

Stats Office releases August retail figures

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: HEALTH CARE UNDER CONTINUED PRESSURE

The novel coronavirus in Hungary is spreading at a faster pace than ever, putting the country under increasing pressure until a vaccine is at hand, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said.

In an interview with public broadcaster Kossuth Rádió, Orbán said that the government was ready to open additional hospitals and to assign more doctors and nurses "in an effort to keep up with the task". Orbán said he expected the second wave of the coronavirus epidemic to last longer and be more difficult than the first one. He said it would require restructuring while simultaneously increasing health-care workers' capability of carrying burdens.

Commenting on the agreement reached between the government and the Hungarian Chamber of Doctors (MOK) on substantially raising the wages of doctors, Orbán said the chamber had been "pushing" its proposals to the government over several months, triggering a debate in the cabinet on whether a substantial wage hike in the sector would be in conflict with necessary economy protection measures. "This is the moment when we need to stand together, when we need to achieve a breakthrough in improving doctors' pay," Orbán said, noting that on MOK's proposal, gratuity payments were going to be eliminated from the system.

ORBÁN: EC REPORT COMES AFTER HUNGARY'S REJECTION OF EU MIGRATION PLAN

In connection with the European Commission's recently released Rule of Law report, Orbán said "the picture has become clear as one followed the sequence of events". The EC first released a migration plan which the Visegrad Group rejected, Orbán said in an interview with public broadcaster Kossuth Rádió. A next step was the Commission's Vice-President Vera Jourová "attacking Hungary" and "branding Hungarians as idiots" which Orbán said was "unacceptable". "A top EU official cannot be allowed to speak in disrespectful terms about the citizens of any member state, including Hungarians," Orbán said, adding that had the EC Vice-President spoken in such a tone about the Germans or French, she "would have been fired in an instant". "We want equal treatment, as we will not tolerate being offended the same way Germans or French would refuse to be," the prime minister said. Orbán said the third step after Jourová's "attack" was the EC's releasing its Rule of Law report. Orbán called the document a "Soros report", adding that 12 of the 13 source organisations referenced in it had received financial support from the US financier. He said the EC report was "an open, coordinated attack".

Orbán said he suggested to the European Commission to "consider

carefully" its strengths and the challenges posed by the global coronavirus pandemic. He said protection measures should be in focus, but instead, "member states are being attacked, the issue of migration is being raised again and incomprehensible rule of law disputes are being generated". As regards the letter he had sent to Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, in which he called for the resignation of Vera Jourová, Orbán said he had yet to receive an answer. Orbán insisted that European politicians were "tense" because the EU's share of world economy has shrunk from 24%-25% twenty years ago to some 15% today.

Regarding the EU's economic recovery package designed to mitigate the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic, Orbán said Hungary "is not happy about the idea of a loan taken out jointly by the member states, to be paid back over the course of 30 years," but was ready to go along with it to aid the countries urgently needing financial help. Meanwhile, Brussels should focus on pandemic defence rather than making funding conditional on "complicated legal requirements", as that could "financially rattle certain countries," Orbán said.

On another topic, Orbán marked the tenth anniversary of the 2010 red sludge disaster, when a reservoir burst and flooded three villages near Ajka, central Hungary. Orbán said the reconstruction showed "the greatness of the Hungarian nation ... and the strength of cooperation". The

government did not leave victims by the wayside but helped to reconstruct the area, he said.

Commenting on a children's tale book which sparked controversy by retelling classical fairy tales featuring sexual and other minorities as main characters, Orbán called discussions regarding homosexuality "complicated". "Hungary is tolerant and patient regarding homosexuality. But there is a red line that shouldn't be crossed, and that is how I would like to sum up my opinion: leave our children alone," Orbán said.

TEN FATALITIES, REGISTERED INFECTIONS UP 858 IN HUNGARY

Ten Covid-19 patients with chronic underlying illnesses have died in the past 24 hours, while the number of registered coronavirus infections in Hungary has risen by 858 to 30,575, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Sunday morning. The number of fatalities stands at 822, and 7,470 people have made a recovery. There are 22,283 active infections and 685 Covid-19 patients are being treated in hospital, 42 on ventilators. Altogether 19,923 people are in official home quarantine and 759,174 tests have been carried out. The website warned Hungarians to observe social distancing guidelines and hygiene regulations. Entry restrictions for travellers from abroad remain in force. 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. Most infections have been registered in Budapest (11,015), followed by Pest County (4,049) and the counties of Győr-Moson-Sopron (1,623), Hajdú-Bihar (1,363) Fejér (1,333), Csongrád-Csanád (1,319) and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (1,302). Tolna County has the fewest infections (301).

DOCTORS TO RECEIVE 'UNPRECEDENTED' WAGE HIKE

Hungary's government and the Hungarian Chamber of Doctors (MOK) have agreed to raise doctors' wages by an "unprecedented" rate, and to "phase out" gratuity payments, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said.

In a video posted after a meeting between government members and MOK representatives, Orbán said the government had accepted the chamber's proposal regarding the wage increase, and will submit a bill to parliament on Monday. The meeting focused on the coronavirus pandemic, Orbán said. "It is clear that the pandemic is on the rise and the trend will remain so until a vaccine is at hand," he said. Last week's Brussels summit made it clear that a vaccine cannot be expected before mid-2021, he added. Hospitals will be under enormous pressure in the coming 7 to 8 months, Orbán said. Doctors and nurses will need to work beyond their strength to heal and ensure adequate

care to all those infected, he said. The government agreed with MOK that such an effort will be impossible to maintain without a wage hike, Orbán said. "We need to stand together, and achieve a breakthrough in improving doctors' wages," Orbán said. Meanwhile, MOK and the government have agreed to "phase out" gratuity payments from the Hungarian health-care system, Orbán added.

DOCTORS' CHAMBER HAILS WAGE HIKE AGREEMENT WITH GOVT AS 'HISTORIC STEP'

The Hungarian Chamber of Doctors (MOK) called its agreement with the government on substantially raising doctors' wages a "historic step", saying that it laid the groundwork for "competent work free of gratuity payments". MOK head Gyula Kincses told an online press conference that under the agreement, resident physicians would earn between 700,000 and 800,000 forints (EUR 1,900-2,200) a month, and salaries for experienced doctors before retirement would come to 2.4 million forints. Such wages are also expected to stop doctors' emigration from Hungary, Kincses said.

Kincses welcomed that the government had accepted the chamber's proposal regarding salaries, and said that adequate wages were the starting point of addressing the problems of the Hungarian health-care system. Kincses said doctors are expected to receive about 65-

70% of the raise starting January 1, 2021, and the full salary increase will be completed by 2022 or no later than January, 2023. At the same time, offering and accepting gratuity payments from patients will become punishable by law, Kincses said.

ORBÁN MARKS GERMAN UNITY DAY

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán sent a letter of congratulations to German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday, marking German Unity Day, the country's national holiday. Orbán said Germany's reunification after the fall of communism in 1990 was "a great celebration, especially to us Hungarians. From the crack created when we knocked the first brick from the Berlin Wall, Germany's desire for freedom fashioned a gateway to German and European unity," Orbán said. Thirty years ago, Hungary supported Germany's independence "because we knew our own freedom and independence would remain a futile dream without it," Orbán said. Orbán pledged Hungary's support to Germany in "protecting and strengthening a united, sovereign, safe and competitive Europe."

At an event marking the German national day in Budapest, a state secretary of the Defence Ministry said the events around the fall of communism had "brought European nations closer to each other". The fall of the Berlin Wall was the "glorious peak" of the regime changes in eastern

Europe and Europe's reunification, he said. István Szabó noted that Hungary and Germany had since found many areas of cooperation. Hungarian and German troops have been fighting side by side in Afghanistan for 11 years, he said. He thanked the German Armed Forces for mentoring the central European International Command, which had been created at Hungary's initiative. Johannes Haindl, Germany's Ambassador to Hungary, said Germany was and will always be grateful to Hungary. Germany's reunification would not have been possible without Hungary opening its borders to Austria in 1989, he said. Germany and Hungary are closely linked, Haindl said, adding that nation states in themselves were no longer able to rise to global challenges, but needed the EU's stability more than ever.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: EU MUST CLEARLY COMMUNICATE BORDER CROSSING CRITERIA

The European Union must make it clear that the only way to enter its territory is in a lawful way, or else the migration pressure on Hungary's and Greece's borders will not ease, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said. Speaking after talks with his Greek counterpart Nikos Dendias, Szijjártó said that uncontrolled waves of migration posed an even greater danger than before in view of the coronavirus pandemic. On top of earlier security and cultural challenges illegal migration is now posing a serious health risk, too, he said.

Szijjártó voiced regret that the EU's new migration package "makes the same mistakes as the ones that caused a lot of trouble to Europe in recent years". According to the pact, mandatory migrant quotas would be maintained "if under a different name", which the Hungarian government finds unacceptable, Szijjártó said.

Assisting persecuted Christians, especially in the Middle East, is a crucial, shared goal for Hungary and Greece, Szijjártó said. Parties at the talks agreed to jointly support projects to help Christian communities in Jordan, he added. Szijjártó and Dendias agreed that people smuggling gangs must be eliminated. Supporting people smuggling and illegal migration is a crime "even if committed by an NGO", Szijjártó said. Dendias said that no open issues hindered bilateral relations with Hungary, and the two countries could cooperate in the EU in several areas. Dendias also urged a joint European solution to the migration problem. Concerning tension with Turkey, Dendias said that conflict was rooted in "Greece's observing international law while Turkey is violating it". If Turkey wishes to join the EU it must observe international law and accept the rules of the EU, too, he added.

KARÁCSONY STARTS ASSESSMENT OF FIRST YEAR AS MAYOR

Gergely Karácsony, the mayor of Budapest, started to evaluate his work over the past 12 months as a

city leader. In the first of a series of video messages, Karácsony assessed the city's work under his leadership since his election in October last year. Outlining activities and measures covering the city's social sector, Karácsony said the city had provided subsidies to support elderly care homes and homeless care, increased capacity in homeless shelters, and distributed half a million portions of meals to Budapest social care homes during the first wave of the coronavirus epidemic. In a further coronavirus-related measure, the city concluded agreements to support small and medium-sized enterprises hit hard by the epidemic and people who lost their jobs, he added. A free travel pass was introduced for job seekers in Budapest's public transport and a wage subsidy was granted to more than 20,000 employees on low wages at Budapest public service companies, the mayor said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ SLAMS SALVINI TRIAL OVER DETENTION OF MIGRANTS AS 'SHAMEFUL'

The Hungarian foreign minister called it "shameful" that Matteo Salvini, the leader of the Italy's opposition League party, has to appear in court, rather than those smuggling migrants to Italy. Péter Szijjártó said on Facebook that the former interior minister has been called to appear in court over the alleged detention of a group of migrants at sea. Illegal immigration carries security, cultural

and, during the pandemic, serious health risks to Europe, Szijjártó said. Salvini as an interior minister prevented “people smuggling rings acting as NGOs” from taking illegal migrants to Italy, and in that way to Europe, he said. Salvini should be thanked for it not only by Italy, but the whole of Europe, he said.

SOCIALISTS ASK PM OFFICE HEAD ABOUT ‘BOTCHED’ APPLICATION FOR EC JOB SUPPORT FUNDING

Socialist MEP István Ujhelyi has submitted a written query to the head of the Prime Minister’s Office, asking for an explanation on Hungary’s “failed” application for the European Commission’s funding designed to mitigate unemployment risks. The EC’s instrument for temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE) was launched on

August 24, and has since disbursed 87.4 billion euros to 16 member states. The instrument has been created to support countries hit by the coronavirus epidemic, by disbursing loans to support short-term work schemes and other measures.

Ujhelyi told an online press conference on that Poland had received 11.4 billion euros, and the Czech Republic 2 billion euros. Hungary’s application was the only one the EC rejected, Ujhelyi said. Ujhelyi said he has asked Gulyás to provide detailed information about the Hungarian application and the EC’s reasoning for rejecting it, and on the sectors and the number of jobs the government was going to protect with the funds. The coronavirus epidemic has hit hard hundreds of thousands who lost most of their income while their living costs remained the same, Ujhelyi said. The Socialists aim to distribute the wealth produced by the public equally and so it creates

opportunities for everyone, he said. The government “has an obligation” to support the protection of all jobs equally, he said.

COURT HANDS THREE SYRIANS SUSPENDED PRISON SENTENCES OVER ATTEMPT AT RÖSZKE

A local court in Szeged handed in a binding ruling one-year prison sentences, suspended for two years, to three Syrian nationals, respectively, for entering Hungary illegally in a recent attempt. The three men, aged 30, 41 and 42, have been expelled from Hungary’s territory for a period of two years, according to the ruling. The men were among members of a large group of migrants who attempted to illegally enter Hungary using violent means at the Röszke border crossing with Serbia on Tuesday night. Police thwarted their multiple attempts to cross the border and arrested three migrants near the border. The three Syrians admitted to the crime during the court hearing.

