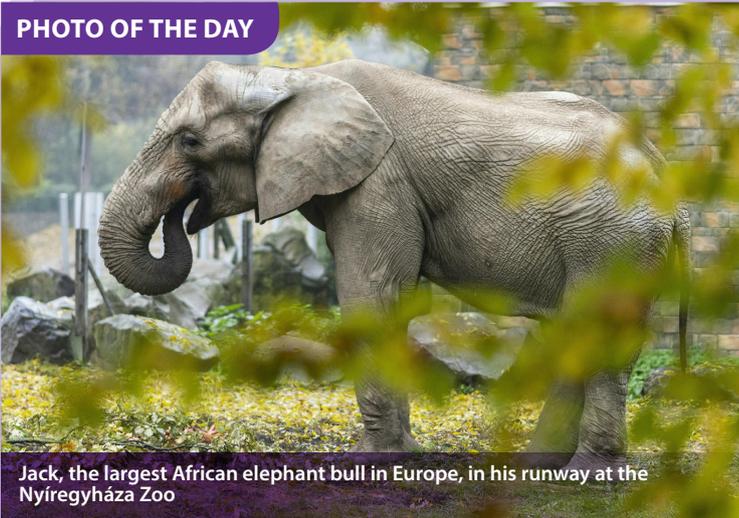


PHOTO OF THE DAY



Jack, the largest African elephant bull in Europe, in his runway at the Nyíregyháza Zoo

MTVA/Attila Balázs

UPCOMING EVENTS

Plenary session of parliament

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

REVOLUTION OF 1956 MARKED

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán commemorated the 64th anniversary of Hungary's 1956 anti-Soviet uprising together with freedom fighter Mária Wittner.

The prime minister and Wittner, who was sentenced to death for her involvement in the 1956 uprising before the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, laid a wreath at a memorial in Budapest's Corvin Lane, a site of gruesome fights during the revolution.

Hungary's national flag was hoisted with military honours at Kossuth Square in front of Parliament. The ceremony was attended by House Speaker László Kövér, Defence Minister Tibor Benkő and Army Commander Ferenc Korom. In light of the coronavirus pandemic, most state commemorations were cancelled. At an event in the park of City Hall, Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony said coming together as a community was what gave importance to October 23, this day in 1956, and in 1989. Twice already, October 23 "reflected our better selves and our best ability", Karácsony said. "This shows that despite the thousand and one differences separating us ... there was something much stronger binding us together: our love for freedom and for our homeland," he said, opening a portrait exhibition of women who played a role in 1956.

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ORBÁN: HUNGARY AIMS TO HAVE SWIFT ACCESS TO VACCINE

The Hungarian government is working to ensure that Hungary is among the first countries to have access to a safe vaccine against Covid-19, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said on Facebook after a meeting of the operative board responsible for handling the epidemic. In his video message, the prime minister said Hungary has signed up for all European Union-based coronavirus vaccine research programmes. The epidemic is gaining momentum all over Europe, including Hungary, Orbán said, adding that Hungary's infection rates were "in ranges of those of Austria". Orbán said the operative board reviewed the rules on mask-wearing. "We've given the public a grace period and by now everyone has had enough time to grasp that wearing masks is the only way to curb the epidemic," he said. Orbán said he has instructed Interior Minister Sándor Pintér to have the existing regulations enforced in a way so that mask-wearing becomes universal. The meeting also touched on the availability of flu vaccines, which the prime minister noted was free for all members of the public.

GULYÁS PRESENTS HIGH STATE AWARDS

Gergely Gulyás, head of the Prime Minister's Office, presented high state awards on behalf of President János

Áder on the occasion of Hungary's October 23 national holiday. In his address, Gulyás said that "we must never again get into a situation when we could be deprived of our freedom". He insisted that "we must not allow the ideas of communism to regain control over our everyday life, that Marx and Lenin statues should be erected under the pretext of the rule of law". "Sixty-four years ago Hungarians gave a courageous example to the world, demonstrating that freedom for them was more important than life." Referring to the revolutionaries of 1956, Gulyás said that there were "factory workers and medical students, peasants and army officers, impoverished aristocrats and Jewish intellectuals, poor gypsy girls and dedicated communists, Catholic monks and Protestant pastors, students, trainees, well-known athletes, actors, and lots of ethnic Hungarians from other countries". "They knew that it was worth fighting because they belonged together, had a shared homeland and a shared freedom". "We now have our freedom, however, the cruel lesson of the 20th century is that wedged between great powers, we in central Europe can only preserve that freedom if we cooperate and join our strength to promote our interests".

OPPOSITION PARTIES MARK 1956 ANNIVERSARY IN JOINT VIDEO MESSAGE

Hungary's opposition parties paid tribute to the heroes of the anti-Soviet uprising of 1956 in a joint Facebook

video message. Péter Jakab, leader of conservative Jobbik, called October 23 a symbol of Hungarians' desire for freedom. "Regardless of whether someone was politically right or left-leaning, their background or beliefs, there was an agreement that oppression and exploitation needed to end," Jakab said. Tímea Szabó, the co-leader of liberal Párbeszéd, said this day represented justice, arguing that "progress cannot be about replacing our old overlords with new ones while millions are left on the side of the road ... with the overlords of the day swanning around in luxury while millions are still forced to struggle just to make ends meet". LMP co-leader Máté Kanász-Nagy said Oct. 23 had been the day when Hungary "woke up" and declared that it wanted to go in a new direction with new leaders. Erzsébet Schmuck, the party's other co-leader, added that the national holiday was a symbol of Hungarians' perseverance. "Hungarians' desire for freedom is stronger than any oppressive regime and in the end, liberty and justice shall prevail," she said.

Democratic Coalition leader Ferenc Gyurcsány said it was "the shame of [Prime Minister Viktor] Orbán's regime" that the demands of the revolutionaries of 1956 were "still valid today". He noted that the people had demanded a new national assembly, a fair right to strike along with a freedom of the press and expression. They also wanted to be free of Soviet Russian influence and belong to

Europe, he added. Socialist Party co-leader Bertalan Tóth called Oct. 23 the symbol of workers' councils and self-determination. Hungary is in the process of becoming a feudal society, he said, arguing that working people were vulnerable and deprived of their rights. Tóth said the revolutionaries of 1956 had also demanded that workers be treated with dignity and as autonomous actors. "This is what they were fighting for then and this is what we have to fight for today." Ágnes Kunhalmi, the party's other co-leader, said history had taught Hungarians that together they were strong enough to reclaim their dignity and freedom. András Fekete-Győr of the Momentum Movement said that like in 1956, Hungarians today did not want "Eastern-style oppression". "Those in power today are flirting with countries like Putin's Russia when in 1956 few things were as clear as the fact that Hungary belongs in a Western civic democracy," he said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ HITS BACK AT TUSK'S CRITICISM OF HUNGARIAN DEMOCRACY

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó slapped down European People's Party leader Donald Tusk's recent criticism of the state of Hungary's democracy, saying that the EPP leader had "failed both as a party leader and as a person". In an interview with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty earlier this week, Tusk said Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's goal to establish Hungary as

an "illiberal democracy" had led to the creation of a "degenerate democracy" in the country.

Szjijártó in a Facebook post slammed Tusk's remarks, saying that calling Hungary's democracy "degenerate" called into question the achievements of the Hungarian people. "Up until thirty years ago, this nation had been fighting its entire history to live in freedom and democracy," the minister said. He said that as the head of the EPP Tusk had failed to ease the burden on Europeans during the pandemic. "Donald Tusk has provided no help in the procurement of a single ventilator or in saving a single job in Europe," Szijjártó said.

"I understand that being forced out of Poland's domestic political scene has been hard on Donald Tusk," he said. "I also understand that his failure to get back in has been even harder. And I can also see how he would be frustrated by the close cooperation between the Polish and Hungarian governments, which is based on the centuries-long brotherhood between our nations."

DRAMA STUDENTS STAGE MARCH FOR UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY

Students of Budapest's University of Theatre and Film Arts (SZFE) organised a protest march for the autonomy of higher education on Friday, the anniversary of the 1956 revolution. Participants walked from the Technical University on the Buda

side to SZFE's campus in central Pest, where they commemorated the revolution and held speeches. The crowd filled Rákóczi Road between Vas Street and Elisabeth Bridge. The demonstration was supported by trade unions and students of other universities. Speaking on behalf of SZFE students, Noémi Vilmos said that "Hungary is not doing better" and called on the government to resolve the country's problems rather than "cover them up, lie, or blackmail". Other student speakers warned that "what is happening to SZFE could happen to other universities, too". They suggested that the government was expanding its powers and the "model shift" would be extended to other universities, too. "Don't be afraid to stand up for your university, get organised and act up," the speakers said. Erzsébet Nagy, of teachers' union PDSZ, said that the government was "systematically dismantling the autonomy" of institutions, and insisted that the same thing had happened when schools were centralised, with decisions made "far from the schools, in the ministries". "The goal is not to raise autonomous citizens but ones that follow norms; the government wants slaves without rights, faithful supporters rather than educated minds," she said. "There is no free country without free education," Nagy added.

Tamás Székely, deputy leader of trade union federation MSZSZ, said that "everyone has the right to resist violence, and the way the government kicked in SZFE's door was violence

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itself". Andrea Szkaliczki, a doctor, criticised a recent law on the legal status of medical professionals, and said that imposing restrictions on doctors working in secondary jobs would lead to the elimination of health services in many places. She also said that doctors subjected to a system in which they could be transferred from one place to the other without their consent was unacceptable.

**BUDAPEST COURT RULES
FILM, DRAMA UNIVERSITY
STAFF STRIKE UNLAWFUL**

A Budapest court has declared a strike by staff members of Budapest's University of Theatre and Film Arts (SZFE) unlawful, the Theatre and Film Foundation, which oversees the university, and the institution's new leadership said. In a joint statement, the foundation and the new leadership noted that the institution's strike committee had compiled a list of eight demands of which two had been met by SZFE's leaders. The university's leadership has offered employees a phased 10-15% pay rise and has agreed to maintain their current working schedule, they said. In its first-instance ruling, the Budapest Municipal Court ruled the strike organised by SZFE employees based on their remaining six demands unlawful, the statement said. It also cited the court as saying that employees had begun the strike before the deadline for mandatory talks required by law with the university's leadership had expired. The foundation

called on those participating in the strike to resume work under the management of the new leadership. SZFE's previous senate and leadership announced their resignation on Aug. 31, saying the foundation that took over the university on Sept. 1 under a government decree had deprived them of "all essential powers". The students cordoned off the university's main building and employees went on strike.

**THIRTY-FIVE CORONAVIRUS
PATIENTS DIE, INFECTIONS
UP BY 3,149**

Thirty-five Covid-19 patients, mostly elderly and suffering from an underlying illness, died in the past 24 hours, and registered coronavirus infections rose by 3,149 to 59,247, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Sunday. The death toll rose to 1,425, while 16,242 people have made a recovery. There are 41,580 active infections, while 2,449 patients are hospitalised, 221 on ventilators. Fully 27,883 people are in official home quarantine, while the number of tests carried out stands at 980,373. Border controls and entry restrictions remain in place and citizens have been asked to avoid participating in large events. Wearing a face mask is obligatory in shops, on public transport and in cinemas, theatres, shopping malls, as well as in health and social-care facilities and at open-air events, including sports events. Restaurants and entertainment venues must close at 11pm. An autumn break has begun in schools

during which period the institutions will undergo disinfection, the portal said. Visits to hospitals and nursing homes are banned and temperature measurements are being carried out at school gates. Budapest (16,958) and Pest County (7,350) have the most infections, followed by the counties of Győr-Moson-Sopron (3,667), Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (3,632), Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (2,941) and Hajdú-Bihar (2,879). Tolna County has the fewest infections (609).

**CHIEF EPIDEMIOLOGIST
EXPECTS RAPID INCREASE
IN HOSPITALISATIONS**

The progressive rise in the average age of coronavirus patients means that more and more people can be expected to require hospital treatment and intensive care, Hungary's chief epidemiologist has said. Wearing face masks and disinfection remain the cornerstones of slowing the spread of Covid-19, János Szlávik of the Budapest South Pest Hospital told public media. He emphasised the importance of vulnerable groups getting inoculated against the flu, saying it would make it easier for doctors to separate flu and coronavirus patients. He said the ongoing trials of Covid-19 treatments remdesivir and favipiravir were expected to conclude in two to three months, after which there would be precise data available on their effectiveness. Szlávik also said there was a noticeable trend across Europe of people growing tired of the restrictions

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and having to wear masks. "We must fight this sentiment and explain to people that they have to hold out a little while longer because the vaccine is now almost at an arm's length."

SOCIALISTS: GOVT 'LYING' ABOUT HUNGARY EPIDEMIC

The opposition Socialist Party has accused the government of "misleading" the public concerning the extent of the coronavirus epidemic in Hungary. Socialist lawmaker Ildikó Bangó Borbély said Gergely Gulyás, the Prime Minister's chief of staff, was trying to deceive the public by underplaying the situation in Hungary. She said that whereas Gulyás had claimed Hungary was among the most successful countries in fighting against the epidemic, this was no longer the case during the second wave, adding that since mid-September, Hungary's death figures had been worse than the European average. "Only in the Czech Republic and Romania is the situation significantly worse than in Hungary," she said. She said it was far from reassuring that the government was prepared to examine the Russian coronavirus vaccine, adding that reports suggested questions remained over its effectiveness. She called on the government to ensure that coronavirus tests are free for all workers and especially for groups at high risk of infection such as health-care and social workers, teachers, mothers and kindergarten staff.

COUNCIL OF EU APPROVES EUR 504 M CREDIT FOR HUNGARY

The Council of the European Union has approved a 504 million euro credit for Hungary, within the framework of the EU's SURE programme to protect jobs in countries hit hard by the coronavirus epidemic, the finance ministry has said. The European Commission's instrument for temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE) was launched on August 24, and has disbursed 87.8 billion euros to 17 member states. The instrument has been created to support countries hit by the coronavirus epidemic, by issuing loans to support short-term work schemes and other measures. The applicants are scheduled to receive around half of the support this year, and the other half in early 2021. The credit, available with favourable conditions, will refinance job protection and job health protection measures introduced after February 1, 2021, the ministry said. In the statement, the finance ministry noted that the Hungarian government had already provided aid to some 900,000 jobholders, by grants to help their positions on the labour market or training support.

DEMOCRATIC COALITION CELEBRATES 9TH ANNIVERSARY

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) celebrated its ninth anniversary

on Saturday, at an online event in view of the coronavirus epidemic. In a short film, MEP Klára Dobrev said last year's local elections had shown that the Hungarian opposition could win and govern if they cooperated. An all-opposition cooperation handed "the Orbán regime" its first serious defeat, she said. Dobrev pledged to stick to the "recipe of winning" in the 2022 general elections. In a video message, David Maria Sassoli, the President of the European Parliament, greeted DK, calling it a young party with significant achievements and a commitment to pro-European principles.

GOVT OFFICIAL: SZEKLER LEADERS CAN COUNT ON HUNGARY'S SUPPORT IN STRUGGLE FOR AUTONOMY

If the Szekler people and their leaders commit themselves in full to a fight for autonomy, they can count on the Hungarian government's support, the state secretary for Hungarians across the border said in Siculeni (Madéfalva), in central Romania. Marking the Day of Szekler Autonomy, observed on the last Sunday of October, Árpád János Potápi said that unlike in 1956, the fight for freedom today had to be waged with petitions, rather than weapons. The state secretary urged those in attendance to gather as many people as they could to sign the European citizens' initiative on protecting national regions launched by the Szekler National Council.

SZIJJÁRTÓ URGES TRANSCARPATIA HUNGARIANS TO VOTE IN UKRAINE LOCAL ELECTION

Hungarians living in Ukraine should turn out in large numbers at the country's local elections, to ensure representation in local governments, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said. In a Facebook post, Szijjártó encouraged Hungarians to vote in the local election, noting that the Transcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association (KMKSZ) is the only Hungarian organisation running for seats in the Transcarpathia County Council. "It would be bad if Hungarians were left without county-level representation," he said. He praised Zoltán Babják, the incumbent mayor of Berehove (Beregszász), as "doing a great job ... it would be good if he could continue." Transcarpathia Hungarians returning to Hungary after voting at the election will be exempt from quarantine obligations, he said, and the border crossing at Barabás-Kosyny will be opened to facilitate transport.

SEVERAL HUNGARIAN CITIES PLAGUED BY POOR AIR QUALITY

Several Hungarian towns and cities are plagued by poor air quality due to a high concentration of PM2.5 airborne particles, the National Public Health Centre (NNK) has said. The air quality in Kazincbarcika, Putnok, Sajószentpéter and Várpalota has

deteriorated to unhealthy levels, NNK said. Concentrations of particulate matter are also considered to be too high in Budapest, Esztergom, Győr, Miskolc, Nyíregyháza, Sopron, Szeged, Székesfehérvár and Vác.

BUDGET DEFICIT EDGES UP TO HUF 2,270 BN AT END- SEPT, MINISTRY CONFIRMS

Hungary's budget deficit, excluding local councils, reached 2,270.3 billion forints (EUR 6.2bn) at the end of September, up 9 billion from a month earlier, the Finance Ministry said. The central budget had a 1,841.8 billion forint deficit and the social insurance funds were 441.8 billion forints in the red, but the separate state funds had a surplus of 13.3 billion forints. The deficit has swelled this year on the back of pandemic spending, economic stimulus and pre-financing for European Union-funded projects. The ministry said spending on medical equipment necessary for protection against the pandemic came to 581.4 billion forints by the end of September. Payouts for European Union-funded projects reached 1,500.8 billion forints, while transfers from Brussels came to just 909.4 billion. Among other expenditures, the ministry noted 150.9 billion forints in business grants to boost competitiveness in the face of the coronavirus crisis, 128.5 billion forints for tourism developments and 49.5 billion forints for investment incentives.

HIPA RANKED REGION'S TOP INVESTMENT PROMOTION AGENCY FOR SECOND CONSECUTIVE YEAR

The Hungarian Investment Promotion Agency (HIPA) has been ranked as the best such agency across the region comprising central Europe and central Asia for the second year in a row, a foreign ministry official said. The recognition comes from the Annual Investment Meeting (AIM), one of the world's most prestigious gatherings of the international investment community, Tamás Menczer, the state secretary for communications and international representation, said on Facebook. Thanks to HIPA's efforts the Hungarian economy saw a record 101 major investments worth 5.3 billion euros in 2019, Menczer said. The investments helped create 13,493 jobs, he added.

HUNGARY TO SEND 150 VENTILATORS TO CZECH REPUBLIC

Hungary will send 150 ventilators to the Czech Republic, Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš said on Twitter. The Czech fire service will transport the ventilators to warehouses of the state reserve fund, from where they will be taken to hospitals as needed. The Czech authorities said they had asked for assistance from European Union and NATO member states in their fight against the rapid spread of the virus. Babiš said that the European Commission was sending 30 ventilators to Prague from its own reserves.