

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/György Varga

Xantus János Spherical Lookout in Balatonboglár named lookout of the year by the Centre for Active and Ecotourism Development

UPCOMING EVENTS

NBH governor opens Budapest Eurasia Forum 2020 online conference

Parliamentary committee meetings

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

LAWMAKERS APPROVE CHANGES TO QUARANTINE RULES

Lawmakers have approved several changes to Hungary's rules on quarantine which include increased fines for violators.

The new regulations raise the maximum fine that can be levied for breaches of home quarantine orders from 50,000 forints to 150,000 forints (EUR 410). The resolution also streamlines rules on the three types of quarantine that can be applied by the authorities. Under the amendment, those entering Hungary from abroad will now be required to immediately begin self-isolation rather than having to wait until an official home quarantine order is issued. The amendment proposals submitted by the head of the Prime Minister's Office were approved with 117 votes in favour, 23 against and 19 abstentions. Róbert Kiss, a spokesman for the operative board coordinating Hungary's response to the epidemic, told a press conference that 10,007 people were ordered into home quarantine by the authorities over the holiday weekend, 2,235 of them at border crossings. Currently 28,070 people are in official home quarantine, he said, adding that 1,174 of them have registered to use the smartphone application that can monitor compliance with quarantine orders.

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FIRST COVID-19 PATIENT TREATED WITH HUNGARIAN-MADE REMDESIVIR LEAVES HOSPITAL

A 75 year old woman, the first Covid-19 patient to be treated with Remdesivir produced in Hungary, has been released from hospital, the Budapest Semmelweis University said. The diabetic patient admitted to hospital with serious pneumonia on October 14 immediately received a combined therapy that included doses of Remdesivir, the university said, adding that the therapy had significantly improved her condition. The patient is now convalescing in her home, it added. According to the university, 19 patients have so far received Remdesivir manufactured by Hungarian pharma company Richter Gedeon.

Remdesivir, a virus inhibitor, is given to Covid-19 patients hospitalised with a serious condition. Clinical trials of Richter's Remdesivir in Hungary started in mid-October, with all four medical universities of the country participating. The drug was approved by the US Food and Drug Administration on October 22.

FORTY-SEVEN COVID-19 PATIENTS DIE, INFECTIONS UP BY 2,316

Forty-seven Covid-19 patients, mostly elderly and suffering from an underlying illness, died in the past

24 hours, and registered coronavirus infections rose by 2,316 to 61,563, koronavirus.gov.hu said. The death toll rose to 1,472, while 16,491 people have made a recovery. There are 43,600 active infections, while 2,602 patients are hospitalised, 233 on ventilators. Fully 28,070 people are in official home quarantine and the number of tests carried out stands at 990,383.

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. Schools are on autumn break during which the institutions are undergoing disinfection, the portal said. Visits to hospitals and nursing homes are banned.

Budapest (17,381) and Pest County (7,714) have the most infections, followed by the counties of Győr-Moson-Sopron (3,832), Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (3,735), Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (3,178), Hajdú-Bihar (2,913) and Csongrád-Csanád (2,752). Tolna County has the fewest infections (627).

HOUSE SPEAKER HAS TALKS IN TALLINN

Hungarian Speaker of Parliament László Kövér held talks with Estonian officials in Tallinn, discussing, among others, bilateral ties, European issues

and migration, the speaker's press chief told MTI. During his visit, Kövér met his Estonian counterpart Henn Polluaas, Anneli Ott, the head of the Estonian parliament's European affairs committee, and Estonian Prime Minister Jüri Ratas.

Kövér, who visited Tallinn at the invitation of Polluaas, said during their talks that Hungary and Estonia were connected through their shared history, traditions and responsibility for future generations. Kövér praised bilateral relations, which he said were based on regular consultations.

Polluaas highlighted the importance of cooperation between the two countries' parliamentary friendship groups and committees, along with their discussions on the future of the European Union and regional cooperation.

The two speakers were in agreement that the issue of migration should fall within the competences of EU member states. They underscored the importance of protecting Christian values, noting that not all member states were in agreement on the matter.

Kövér said Hungary wanted to play a "constructive and proactive" role in the discussions on the future of the EU so that member states could seize the opportunities with which they could create a more competitive bloc. "Hungary's interest lies in a unified and strong union which remains a community of sovereign and independent nation-states," he said.

Concerning the EU's next multi-year budget and post-pandemic recovery

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package, Kóvér said the proposal approved by member states in the summer would only be acceptable to Hungary if it was left as is, without any changes tying receipt of funds to compliance with standards regarding the rule of law.

He noted that Hungary and Estonia will mark the 100th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations next year. Kóvér invited Polluaas for a visit to Hungary so that the two countries could mark the anniversary together.

The meeting between Kóvér and Ratas focused on bilateral ties, the future of the EU and the situation in Belarus. The prime minister expressed his thanks to Kóvér for Hungary's contributions to NATO's Baltic airspace protection mission. Kóvér assured Ratas that if necessary, Hungary was prepared to provide further assistance. As regards migration, Ratas emphasised the importance of cooperating with migrant origin and transit countries, border protection and the repatriation of migrants not eligible for refugee status. Kóvér and Ratas expressed their solidarity with the people of Belarus, urging the country to hold a democratic presidential election.

During his visit Kóvér presented former Estonian foreign minister Trivimi Velliste with the Medium Cross of the Order of Merit of Hungary on behalf of President János Áder for his efforts to protect European Christian values and culture. Kóvér and Polluaas also laid a wreath at the memorial for the Estonian victims of communism.

KARÁCSONY: BUDAPEST DECREE ON MASK-WEARING TO BE REVOKED

An upcoming meeting of the Budapest General Assembly will revoke a municipal decree on mask-wearing because it goes against a government decree, a higher-level regulation, Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony said. In line with the government decree, masks covering the nose and mouth will be mandatory to wear in certain locations and it will not be sufficient to wear a scarf, as stipulated in the municipal decree, Karácsony said on Facebook. "The novel coronavirus epidemic is spreading in the country at an unprecedented rate," he said and asked everyone to observe preventive regulations. Karácsony said the municipal council was first to take action when it had made face covers mandatory in the spring and was also first to introduce stricter regulations in the autumn, making face coverings mandatory not only on public transport and in shops, but also in theatres and other cultural institutions. Thanks to Budapest residents observing the regulations in a disciplined manner, national statistics show that compared to the number of residents, the capital is in the mid-field in terms of the number of infections, he added.

HUNGARY EXPANDS NUMBER OF HOSPITALS TREATING COVID-19 PATIENTS

The human resources minister has ordered the expansion of the number

of hospitals treating coronavirus patients, the ministry has said. Like the rest of Europe, Hungary, too, is seeing a steep rise in its number of coronavirus cases, the human resources ministry told MTI. Outside Budapest, six additional hospitals will be treating Covid-19 patients from now on. These include institutions in Vác, Cegléd, Esztergom, Hatvan, Baja and Orosháza, the ministry said. The hospitals have been instructed to reserve 20% of their beds for Covid-19 patients. Meanwhile, the minister has ordered the institutions already treating Covid-19 patients to prepare 30% of their beds for new cases by Oct. 30. Miklos Kásler has also instructed the head of national ambulance service OMSZ to make sure that those requiring hospital care are transported to one of the secondary or tertiary designated institutions treating coronavirus patients if the primary hospitals are at full capacity, the ministry said.

DK CALLS ON GOVT TO SHARE CORONAVIRUS FIGURES WITH MUNICIPALITIES

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) has proposed that the central government's regional offices should be obliged to share figures related to the novel coronavirus epidemic with local governments. DK lawmaker Zoltán Varga told an online press conference that several of his party's mayors had requested data concerning

the spread of the virus in their localities but they were denied the information. Varga said that local leaders could not take appropriate action unless they have access to the relevant data.

BUDAPEST COUNCIL LAUNCHES INVESTIGATION INTO HIGH NUMBER OF COVID-19 CASES IN ELDERLY HOME

The municipality of Budapest has ordered an investigation into a "high ratio" of coronavirus infections in a seniors' home in the city's northern district 4, the municipality said. The head of the home has been suspended from their post, it said. The municipality and the local public health authority have devised a plan of action to contain the spread of the virus, including more frequent coronavirus screening of the staff, hospitalisation of residents testing positive and isolation of residents free of the infection, the municipality said in a statement.

PÁRBESZÉD CALLS FOR BAN ON PUBLIC EVENTS

Opposition Párbeszéd called for a ban on all events held in public areas including private, company and state events. Party group leader Tímea Szabó told an online press conference that her party's draft resolution also applies to entertainment and cultural events, such as concerts, football matches, exhibitions and circus

performances. Szabó called on the government to make 2-metre social distancing mandatory in all public areas, except for family members and people living in the same household. Shopping time restrictions should be reintroduced, with the 9-11am time-zone reserved for elderly people, she said. Párbeszéd proposes secondary schools and universities to organise education in a way to allow half of the students have online classes in a rotating system, she added. She also called for more tests to be carried out for the novel coronavirus, with regular fortnightly testing for health and social workers. Szabó said home office should be made an employee right because there will be a time when many parents and contacts will be out of work unless they can do it from home. She also said that she had submitted a proposal to make sickness benefits equal a net 75% of the monthly salary rather than the current 60%.

HUNGARY BUDGET DEFICIT 2.1% OF GDP IN 2019

Hungary's budget ran a 985 billion forint (EUR 2.7bn) deficit last year, equivalent to 2.1% of GDP, data compiled by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) in the framework of an excessive deficit procedure show. The deficit was revised from 958 billion forints, equivalent to 2.0% of GDP, in a preliminary reading released in the spring. KSH noted that National Bank of

Hungary (NBH) data show government sector debt reached 31,078 billion forints at the end of 2019, equivalent to 65.4% of GDP.

HUNGARY CONTESTS EU LORRY RULES WITH CJEU

Hungary's government has filed an action with the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) seeking the annulment of certain provisions in the Mobility Package on the grounds they are discriminatory and run counter to EU climate objectives, the innovation and justice ministries said in a joint statement. The contested provisions impose a disproportionate financial and administrative burden on European hauliers and are also impossible to enforce, the ministry said. The statement noted that the European Parliament and the European Council had approved the Mobility Package in July in the face of vocal opposition by Hungary and other member states. It said the Hungarian government had taken a stand against the provisions in all available forums since the drafting of the package started three years earlier.

The declared goals of the new regulations are to protect the interests of lorry drivers, while improving their social and work conditions, but the Hungarian government is of the view that the new provisions address existing problems poorly and further worsen the situation of those affected rather than resolving issues, the ministry said. The provisions

run contrary to the principle of free movement of labour, goods and services; and they restrict the operation of the unified market and national markets with protectionist measures, it added. The document said the provisions give hauliers from outside of the EU an advantage, which hurts member states economically and can cause a deterioration in traffic safety conditions for EU citizens.

The government's CJEU action seeks to exempt hauliers from the EU directive on posted workers, to exempt accompanied combined transport from new rules on combined transport, to scrap the prohibition on sleeping in cabs because of the insufficient number of safe rest stops, to roll back the deadline for installing smart tachographs to the originally planned 2034, and to eliminate a rule requiring lorry drivers to return to their base of operations every eight weeks.

In a post on Facebook, Justice Minister Judit Varga said the new rules "undermine the EU's internal market and deliberately strengthen the undue competitive advantage of Western European Member States". She said that Hungary had been joined by Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and Romania in consistently opposing the regulations.

BUDAPEST JEWISH AND ISRAELI FILM FESTIVAL TO OFFER 17 TITLES

The international Jewish and Israeli Film Festival will this year feature 17 recent titles on Jewish life, culture and history between November 24 and December 6, organisers have said. The festival's programme includes German, US, Russian, Austrian, Norwegian, Israeli and Hungarian productions which will be shown online in light

of the coronavirus pandemic, they said in a statement. The festival will open with US production Resistance, a true story of legendary French mime Marcel Marceau (Jesse Eisenberg) who helped as a young boy in the French Resistance save the lives of children during WWII. The film features Hungary's Géza Röhrig and Vica Kerekes in supporting roles.

It will also show the drama The Song of Names, which was shot partly in Hungary and stars Tim Roth, Clive Owen, Catherine McCormack. It tells the story of an Englishman travelling through Europe to find his childhood friend, a violin prodigy. Other titles include Russian drama Yumorist about Boris Arkadiev, a fictional Soviet stand-up comedian in the 1980s, the documentary 93Queen about a team of women medics in Brooklyn and the Israeli animation Dead End about two siblings in post-nuclear-war Jerusalem.