

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Tamas Kovacs

Soldier in protective clothing before disinfection of primary school in Budapest

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Foreign Minister Szijjártó holds talks with Kosovan counterpart**

**Stats office releases July-Sept jobs report**

**Coronavirus updates**

**Family affairs minister inaugurates Future Playground**

## TOP STORY

# TOUGHER COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS MULLED

Proposals by the Hungarian Chamber of Doctors to tighten restrictions in the fight against Covid-19 are being considered by the operative board responsible for handling the epidemic, the chief medical officer told a press briefing.

Cecília Müller said in response to a question that some of the chamber's proposals announced on Tuesday had already been implemented. Ways to enforce existing regulations more effectively are also being examined, she said, adding that the operative board was open to cooperation with the doctors' chamber. Müller said Hungary's health-care system was prepared for handling the current wave of the epidemic, with everyone getting the care they need "at the highest level". She said screening capacities were being increased, with 15,596 PCR tests carried out in the past 24 hours.

The Chamber of Doctors proposed stricter and more consistent rules for mass events, including tighter control of mask-wearing and social distancing rules. It also proposed further restrictions on the opening hours and number of guests in restaurants and entertainment venues as well as shopping times for the elderly. It said current screening and contact tracing capacities were insufficient for monitoring the spread of the epidemic and that the government should emphasise the importance of individual prevention.

**ORBÁN CONGRATULATES UKRAINE’S ETHNIC HUNGARIAN PARTY ON ELECTORAL SUCCESS**

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has sent a letter to László Brenzovics, the leader of Ukraine’s ethnic Hungarian KMKSZ party, congratulating him on their success in the recent local elections, Orbán’s press chief said. The Hungarian community in Transcarpathia demonstrated once again the power of cooperation in the October 25 ballot, Bertalan Havasi quoted Orbán as saying. The prime minister said in his letter that “the result of the vote clearly shows that Transcarpathian Hungarians are proud of their thousand-year-old roots and by taking their future in their hands want to thrive as Hungarians in their homeland”. “I believe that the retained and newly gained mayoral and parliamentary seats are important guarantees for the development projects launched in Transcarpathia in recent years to continue,” Orbán said.

**KOVÁCS: HUNGARY, OTHER V4 MEMBERS HANDLED FIRST WAVE ‘VERY EFFECTIVELY’**

The state secretary for international communication and relations talked about the success of Hungary and countries of the region in handling

the first wave of the novel coronavirus epidemic in an interview published by US weekly Newsweek’s Country Report section. Zoltán Kovács said the first wave of the pandemic had been handled very effectively by Hungary, together with the other Visegrad Group (V4) countries but the second wave is different, with a different pandemic situation. He added that the V4’s collective performance in terms of controlling the spread of infection, the number of people infected and hospitalized, and fatality rates stood out as a positive example by global comparison.

During the first wave, Hungary initiated a special legal order which many believed was controversial, but “in comparison with, say, Italy or France, what we did in Hungary isn’t unlike what you’ve seen in Western Europe”, Kovács said, adding that during the pandemic in the spring, the Hungarian parliament continued in session which helped effective protection.

“The same is true for the economic package we have introduced: we believe that compared to intervention by governments in Western Europe and across the world, the Hungarian package is also a positive example,” he said. The government’s primary goal continues to be to protect, save or create as many jobs as possible, Kovács said.

“The philosophy through which we have addressed economic problems over the past 10 years has been a new one. The principle behind this is that we need as many jobs as possible to be

able to support all the other elements of the economy: growth, investment, monetary issues and so on,” he said.

In August, Hungary recorded higher employment numbers than in January, which Kovács said was probably because of the effectiveness and the nature of the Hungarian government’s intervention. “We are proud of it and that remains in the focus of economic job creation intervention by the Hungarian state”, he added.

In response to a question about Hungary attracting direct foreign investment, he said that whereas in the 1990s, investment was mostly attracted by cheap labour and a comparatively cheap economic environment, the government is now much more interested in high value-added industries and investments. Such investments not only help investors from the perspective of high-quality competitive Hungarian labour, but also help the economic environment of Hungarian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), he added.

He said the new industries that Hungary was focusing on were information technology and renewable energy. “There is a very conscious government effort behind this: our base is nuclear energy. We are extending the lifespan of our existing nuclear plant and we are building two new reactors in Hungary to provide the basic energy that we need,” he said. “In addition to this, however, solar technology is going to be the second leg of Hungarian energy security.”

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Kovács said that in terms of sustainability, which comes together with the European policy for carbon emission reductions, “we believe that Hungary is performing well”. Hungary does not exploit its full quota for carbon emission, he said. “Our decisions in the field of energy will contribute toward that goal,” he said. “In this respect, nuclear power plays a major role and we believe that the goals of the EU cannot be met without nuclear energy. Our decisions, which were taken before the very ambitious new goals of the EU were set, are also proving to be right from that perspective”, he added.

In response to a question concerning the benefits of regional integration, he said the V4 formation had not come about by accident but had historical roots.

“The initiative goes back to immediately after the fall of communism but has only fully blossomed in the past couple of years. The reason for this has been the discovery that the historical roots of cooperation are deep enough to provide the basis for our cooperation within the EU,” he added. It has become obvious that central Europe’s historical, sociological and economic foundations and legacies are strong enough to define it as a separate region within the EU, like Scandinavia, the Benelux states, or the Franco-German axis, he said. Kovács said cooperation between countries in the region was very good in handling

the coronavirus epidemic and in energy industry. “We are focusing on infrastructure, including energy infrastructure – gas, oil and electricity lines,” he added.

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### **CORONAVIRUS - 43 DIE, INFECTIONS UP BY 2,291**

Forty-three Covid-19 patients, mostly elderly and suffering from an underlying illness, died in the past 24 hours, and registered coronavirus infections went up by 2,291 to 65,933, [koronavirus.gov.hu](http://koronavirus.gov.hu) said on Wednesday. The death toll rose to 1,578, while 17,098 people have made a recovery. There are 47,257 active infections, while 3,166 patients are hospitalised, 263 on ventilators. Fully 36,678 people are in official home quarantine, while the number of tests carried out stands at 1,017,689.

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 in an autumn break during which the facilities are undergoing disinfection, the portal said. Visits to hospitals and nursing homes are banned.

Budapest (18,339) and Pest County (8,275) have the most infections,

followed by the counties of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (4,230), Győr-Moson-Sopron (4,049), Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (3,495) and Hajdú-Bihar (3,174). Tolna County has the fewest infections (650).

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### **US AMBASSADOR: RELATIONS WITH HUNGARY ‘COULD NOT BE BETTER’**

Relations between Hungary and the United States could not be better, outgoing US Ambassador David B. Cornstein said in an interview published in daily Magyar Nemzet’s Wednesday issue. The ambassador told the paper that US-Hungary relations had been “rather poor” when he came to serve in Hungary in June 2018.

He spoke highly of efforts made towards strengthening mutual security, noting the Defence Cooperation Agreement signed by the two countries last year. Their troops work together in several missions around the world as both sides are committed to defending freedom and democracy, he said.

Asked whether press freedom was “in grave danger” in Hungary, Cornstein said that the general opinion was that the media in the country was more conservative than liberal. He, however, said that he was reading every morning several articles criticising the Hungarian government and its measures. He said there was press freedom in Hungary, but the various media outlets were biased from the

one side or the other and this way the press was not serving its real purpose.

In connection with the upcoming US elections, the ambassador called Donald Trump “a fabulous, fantastic and wonderful” president. He said if Trump remains in office after the presidential election on November 3, bilateral relations could be further boosted to the benefit of both countries. “What I have experienced is clearly that Hungary’s government is not totalitarian. Hungary is a democracy where there are democratic elections, therefore I did not find such remarks justified at all,” the ambassador said.

### **GOVT TO EXTEND CSOK SUBSIDIES TO DUPLEX CONVERSIONS**

The government will extend its Home Purchase Subsidy Scheme for Families (CSOK) to the conversion of family homes into duplexes from January 1, 2021, Minister for Families Katalin Novák said. The option applies exclusively to the creation of an independent flat in the attic, she said. The government supports the creation of homes where several generations live together, she said.

A maximum 10 million forints (EUR 27,000) is available in the non-repayable CSOK support plus another maximum 15 million forints in the CSOK related subsidised-interest loan. CSOK is available for all Hungarians with children or families planning to have children.

Novák said she submitted on Tuesday a bill that will reintroduce a preferential 5% VAT rate on home construction, make new home purchases with CSOK exempt from VAT and all home purchases with CSOK exempt from duties. The home creation programme of the government aims for all Hungarians living in homes of their own, Novák said.

### **FOREIGN MINISTRY: HUNGARY CONCERNED OVER FRENCH-TURKISH CONFLICT**

Hungary, similarly to other European Union member states, is concerned over the increasing tension between France and Turkey, two NATO allies, the foreign ministry said. Hungary hopes that the two countries will return as soon as possible to cooperation as allies on the basis of mutual respect through a bona fide, civilised dialogue, the ministry said on its website. A conflict developed between Paris and Ankara over measures enacted by French President Emmanuel Macron to fight radical Islam in response to the murder of a French teacher who showed cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in class.

### **GOVT OFFERS BUDAPEST HUF 60 BN IN RELIEF, IF IT CAN FINANCE PROJECTS**

The central government has decided to offer the city of

Budapest an initial round of 60 billion forints (EUR 164.4m) in relief, if the government can take over the financing of a number of big municipal projects, the Prime Minister’s Office state secretary for Budapest developments told MTI. The government is proposing taking over the financing of the Biodome in the City Park, the Gellért Hill funicular, the extension of the tram network in Buda, the expansion of the Etele Square bus station, and a project that would partially pedestrianize the Pest embankment road, Balázs Fürjes said in a statement.

He added that the projects had been designated earlier by Gergely Karácsony, the mayor of Budapest, as ones that require more central government support as well as revenue from municipal tax increases and local council loans. Fürjes said the government’s proposal to “develop Budapest together without raising taxes or borrowing” was “simpler and more practical”. He said the central government would give Karácsony a guarantee that the plans for the projects it finances would be drafted together with the municipal council and would only move forward with the approval of city leaders. Fürjes added that the central government would only take over the financing of the projects based on consultations with the local council and the needs of the mayor.

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## **ATTILA PÉTERFALVI APPOINTED NAIH HEAD FOR ANOTHER NINE YEARS**

President János Áder has appointed Attila Péterfalvi to head Hungary's data protection authority (NAIH) for another nine years starting on January 1, 2021.

Péterfalvi received his credentials from Áder in the president's office at the Sándor Palace. Originally trained as a lawyer, Péterfalvi studied data protection on a NATO scholarship in Toronto and Washington DC in 1991. He was Fidesz's advisor prior to the 1994 elections and worked as an advisor to László Majtényi between 1996 and June 2001. He was elected data protection commissioner on December 11, 2001 and was head of the office of parliamentary commissioners after April 1, 2008. He was appointed by President Pál Schmitt to NAIH head for nine years effective January 1, 2012.

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## **OPERATIVE BOARD: FINES FOR QUARANTINE RULE BREACHES RAISED**

Fines Hungarian authorities can levy for breaching quarantine rules have been substantially increased,

under a law amendment that took effect on Wednesday, Róbert Kiss, a spokesman of the central operative board coordinating coronavirus-related measures, said. Lawmakers on Monday approved the new regulations which raise the maximum fine that can be levied for breaches of home quarantine orders from 50,000 forints to 150,000 forints (EUR 410). Under the amendment, police are entitled to levy on the spot also a fine of up to 150,000 forints for repeatedly breaching the rule of a mandatory use of a face mask, Kiss told an online press conference.

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## **MI HAZÁNK DEMANDS GOVT MEASURE AGAINST FACEBOOK**

The Mi Hazánk (Our Homeland) movement calls on the government to take action against the "digital censorship" Facebook practised by banning its account, the deputy leader of the radical opposition party said. Facebook's move is "unacceptable" as it has blocked the account of an officially registered party over a poster announcing a party event to mark the anniversary of the 1956 revolution, Dóra Dúró told a press conference. She said Facebook had already interfered in Hungarian domestic political affairs

during the European parliamentary elections last year when it removed the profile of László Toroczkai, the leader of Mi Hazánk.

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## **BUDAPEST FIREWALL PAINTING 'BERLIN' COMMEMORATES REUNIFICATION OF GERMANY**

A mural evoking Berlin has been painted in German-Hungarian cooperation on a firewall in Budapest to mark the 30th anniversary of the reunification of Germany. The mural at downtown Akácfa Street 27 depicts three figures at the Berlin Wall in clothes painted with the colours of the German flag. It shows the international Peace Sign and landmark buildings of Berlin, the project organisers said in a statement. The painting is a joint project by Frankfurt-based street artist Justus Becker COR and Hungarian partner Katalin Benkő and has been sponsored by the German Embassy and the Colourful City Group.

The statement cited German Ambassador Johannes Haindl as saying that he welcomed the joint project carried out in partnership with the Colourful City Group and an artist from Frankfurt am Main, a sister city of Budapest.