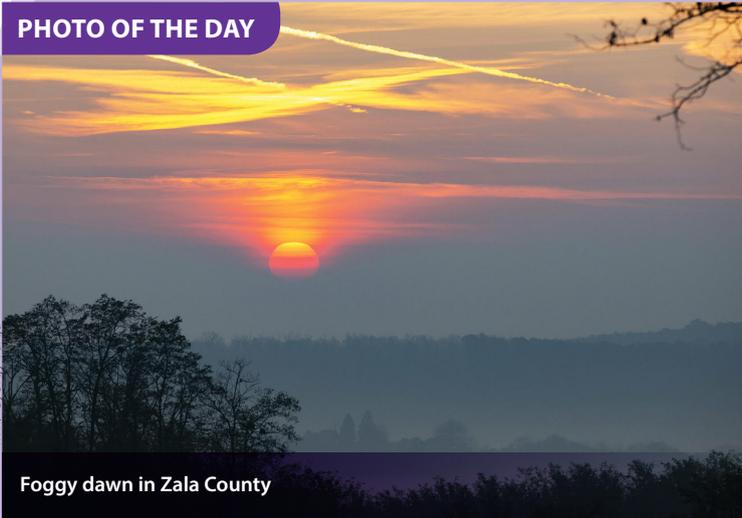


## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI / György Varga

Foggy dawn in Zala County

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Plenary session of parliament**

**Coronavirus updates**

**Hungary officials at Krynica Economic Forum in Poland**

**Music Hungary Conference**

## TOP STORY

### ORBÁN 'PREPARED TO VETO EU BUDGET'

Viktor Orbán is prepared to veto the EU budget and the recovery fund if the payment of funds to member states is tied to the rule of law, according to mandiner.hu.

The prime minister has written to the EU German Presidency concerning the matter, the website said on Sunday. Sanctions on EU member states would be agreed in the European Council by a qualified majority, according to an agreement reached between the European Parliament and the presidency. Approval of the 7-year EU budget and 750 billion euro Next Generation EU fund, however, requires unanimity in the Council. Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki has also indicated his willingness to use Poland's veto if conditions regarding EU payments fall foul of Polish expectations, the website said. Orbán also addressed his letter to the leaders of next year's EU presidencies, Slovenia and Portugal, as well as to Charles Michel, the Council's head, and Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission's president. The prime minister pledged Hungary's commitment to cooperation but added that the government could not guarantee approval of the recovery package adopted in July due to the compromising of Hungarian interests regarding the rule-of-law-EU-payment issue.

**RULE OF LAW ‘BEDROCK’ OF HUNGARY’S VALUE SYSTEM**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said values such as the rule of law were the bedrock of Hungary’s value system and democracy but, he said, the Hungarian people must judge how these are implemented, adding that Hungarians were just as capable this as other European citizens. According to mandiner.hu, Orbán noted that the Hungarian legal system has been properly scrutinised by EU authorities and all outstanding disputes had been resolved. Further, Hungary has submitted “hundreds of pages” of clarification documents over the past two years in connection with the Article 7 procedure ongoing against the country. The prime minister insisted that the Commission’s recent report on the rule of law was based on politically motivated charges against Hungary rather than being fact-based. He added that the report was a way of interfering in the democratic electoral processes of certain countries.

Orbán said the planned sanctions mechanism was based on legally vague definitions such as “violation of the rule of law”. Such hazy concepts create opportunities for political abuses and breach the requirement of legal certainty, he wrote. If this situation persisted, the government would have “no other choice” than to reject the other elements of the July package, he added.

Meanwhile, the foreign minister on Friday that Poland, similarly to Hungary, had come out against a fresh preliminary agreement between the German EU presidency and the EP on tying EU budget allocations to member states “to political and ideological criteria”. Péter Szijjártó said on Facebook that he had discussed the matter with both his Polish counterpart Zbigniew Rau and Polish Minister of Labour, Development and Technology Jaroslaw Gowin by phone earlier in the day. Neither the Hungarian nor the Polish government can allow anyone in a case like this to tie the receipt of European funds to “subjective ideological conditions” or to “use the matter of EU money for political blackmail”, Szijjártó said, adding that he and his Polish partners had assured each other that they would remain committed to their position, and would continue to support one another on the issue.

**ORBÁN CONGRATULATES BIDEN**

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has congratulated Joe Biden, president-elect of the United States, Orbán’s press chief told MTI on Sunday. “Let me congratulate you on your successful presidential campaign. I wish you good health and continued success in fulfilling your responsibilities,” Bertalan Havasi quoted Orbán as saying in his letter.

Meanwhile, President János Áder also sent a letter of congratulations

to Biden, the president’s office said. Historic Hungarian-American relations are built on common values that include their quest for freedom and commitment to democracy, Áder said in his letter. Hungary will seek to further strengthen the two countries’ friendly relations in future, the president said. He said the United States, similarly to other countries, faces challenges with the coronavirus. “While fighting the pandemic, we must not forget to tackle the unfavourable effects of climate change,” Áder said, highlighting the importance of effective international cooperation in resolving global issues. The transatlantic community of nations that share common values is instrumental in maintaining stability in the world. Hungary, as an ally of the United States, will continue to contribute to efforts towards maintaining peace and stability while fighting terrorism, he said. The Hungarian president wished Biden much success in fulfilling his responsibilities.

**KÖVÉR: STRONGER EU MEMBER STATES ‘TERRORISING’ WEAKER ONES**

László Kövér, the speaker of parliament, said in an interview on Sunday that if the European Union succeeded in tying funding to the rule of law, then the rule of law in the bloc itself would be compromised because stronger



countries would be able to bully weaker member states. Kövér told public broadcaster Kossuth Rádió that the EU was pursuing “crude power politics” with a view to getting the better of weaker member states, a ploy he branded as “moral terror”.

The speaker said he had written to EU counterparts of countries that will hold the EU presidency, warning that should Brussels continue to insist on linking funding to the rule of law, the next EU budget and coronavirus aid may be jeopardised. He insisted that countries that tried to exploit the coronavirus epidemic to put pressure on countries such as Hungary and Poland, that were defending their own constitutional sovereignty, would bear responsibility for scuppering the budget and recovery deal.

Germany and the European Parliament delegation, after receiving his letter, then agreed to introduce even stricter rule-of-law provisions than the original proposal, he said. Kövér said EU treaties contain mechanisms precisely aimed at preventing politically or ideologically based proceedings, and these rules “shouldn’t be trampled on”. Introducing new mechanisms that override the treaties could lead the EU “into the abyss”, he added.

Meanwhile, speaking about the media, he insisted that western Europe’s media was dominated by a monolithic voice. He said neither

Hungary nor Poland had problems in this area, and he likened the western media to “Goebbels propaganda” which would have people believe that the Hungarian and Polish governments would be responsible were troubled southern states not to receive recovery aid.

Kövé said the Hungarian government would “fight” for the country’s sovereignty. “We didn’t join an empire,” he said, adding that Hungary had had enough of being “a client state, a colony, of the Soviet Union”.

### **CORONAVIRUS - ORBÁN ASKS TRADE CHAMBER FOR PROPOSALS ON HELPING SMES**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has asked the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MKIK) to submit proposals for measures they consider would help Hungarian SMEs protect jobs. Orbán discussed the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on Hungarian economy and protective measures, Orbán’s press chief said after the meeting on Sunday with the chamber’s head, László Parragh.

Orbán said on Facebook after the meeting that he had briefed Parragh on prospective health-care measures and reiterated that a vaccine, now in sight, would be the solution. “We can now see light at the end of the tunnel, yet we need to wait for several long weeks to pass,” Orbán said, adding that Covid “has also attacked the

fabric not only of the human body but of the economy, too.” Small and medium sized businesses at risk are in the government’s focus because they employ the largest proportion of the Hungarian workforce, Orbán said, adding that he expected to receive the MKIK’s proposals over the coming weeks.

### **CORONAVIRUS - 81 FATALITIES, INFECTIONS UP 4,673**

Fully 81 patients, mostly elderly patients with an underlying illness, have died over the past 24 hours, while 4,673 new coronavirus infections have been registered, bringing the total number of infections since the outbreak in the spring to 109,616, [koronavirus.gov.hu](http://koronavirus.gov.hu) said on Sunday. The death toll has risen to 2,438, while 25,070 have made a recovery. There are 82,108 active infections and 5,803 hospitalised patients, 417 on a ventilator. Fully 34,287 people are in official home quarantine, while the number of tests carried out stands at 1,209,151.

The government has restored the “special legal order”, allowing it to take fast action. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, in a video on Facebook, called on lawmakers to reintroduce the special legal order for 90 days and announced a curfew between midnight and 5am. Nightclubs have been ordered to close. Also, parking will be made free of charge once again with a view to reducing crowds on public transport,

he said. The prime minister said sporting events, cinemas and theatres will have to restrict audiences to using every third seat, and face masks must be worn. The authorities will inspect all events and fine transgressors. Venues that fail to observe the rules will be shut down immediately, he added.

So far most people have been registered in Budapest (27,692) and Pest County (14,197), followed by the counties of Győr-Moson-Sopron (7,429), Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (6,460), Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (5,727) and Hajdú-Bihar (5,526). Tolna County has the fewest infections (1,347).

## **ORBÁN: 'VACCINE THE SOLUTION'**

A vaccine, now in sight, will be the solution to the coronavirus pandemic, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said on social media after a meeting of the Health Scientific Council. "The vaccine is the solution", he said, adding that this outcome was on the horizon. Orbán said there was "a good chance" that European, Chinese and Russian vaccines would be available in Hungary and, after the appropriate assessments, anyone wishing to vaccinate themselves would be able to do so voluntarily. He said that until that point, which he described in terms of "a few weeks", it was important to be "aware of what's going on around us". Austria, he added, was "our laboratory", and he had spoken to the Austrian Chancellor today with a request to share Austrian experience.

Next week, the Russian coronavirus vaccine is expected to reach an important "milestone", enabling Hungary to buy small quantities of the vaccine from December and large quantities from January, the foreign minister said on Facebook on Saturday. Péter Szijjártó also noted Hungary is in talks with Russia on purchasing a license so that the country can produce the vaccine locally. Additionally, Hungary has signalled its intention to buy doses from a Chinese state vaccine manufacturer and two privately owned companies, so Hungary may be among the first countries in Europe to procure vaccines, he said.

On Friday, Szijjártó underscored the importance of quicker decision-making and the soonest possible introduction of a vaccine in tackling the coronavirus pandemic and keeping the country open. He told MTI that he had discussed the state of the pandemic with his Austrian, Czech, Polish and Slovak counterparts earlier in the day. The case numbers and fatalities seen during the second wave of the pandemic are posing a serious challenge to the entire central European region, the minister said. "The daily average statistics we're seeing right now are four or five times the record numbers seen during the first wave, which were then considered absolutely disastrous," he said. "This goes to show that the situation is now far more serious than it was in the spring." He added, however, that the current situation was more favourable in terms of the level of preparedness of the various health-care systems.

## **CORONAVIRUS - NATIONAL HEALTH CENTRE: KARÁCSONY 'WRONG' ABOUT ANTIGEN TESTS**

Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony "is wrong" in trusting antigen detection tests to produce reliable results for Covid infections, the National Public Health Centre (NNK) said, reacting to Karácsony's recent announcement that the municipality of Budapest will purchase 100,000 antigen rapid tests which he said "are as reliable as PCR tests". NNK called the mayor's statement "a huge mistake and professionally unfounded", arguing that antigen tests were unsuitable for mass screenings of those who are symptom-free, or exhibit only mild symptoms of Covid-19 infection. An antigen test in a latter case would most likely produce "a false negative result", NNK said. It recommended the antigen test to be used for patients with moderate to severe symptoms.

Karácsony responded on Facebook, saying that "it is regrettable that NNK has been dragged into the smear campaign directed at the Budapest municipality". Testing for Covid is the duty of the state, he said, adding that the number of tests had been "ridiculously low". He said the municipality of Budapest had already conducted more than 50,000 PCR tests "instead of the state". Karácsony

insisted that unlike PCR tests, antigen tests produced almost 100 percent accuracy “just in a matter of 15 minutes and at a lot lower cost”. “This is why the National Ambulance Service is using them,” Karácsony said, adding that neighbouring Slovakia is using antigen tests to screen the whole population.

**HOLLIK DEMANDS  
MOMENTUM LEADER  
APOLOGISE**

Opposition Momentum leader András Fekete-Győr should apologise for a remark made by a fellow Momentum politician who suggested that a coronavirus vaccine should be tested on Fidesz politicians, a spokesman for the ruling party has said. Tamás Csillag, one of Momentum’s founders, joked sarcastically about the deaths of others on Facebook, saying they would “done well” with a failed vaccine, and further suggesting that Fidesz and Christian Democrat lawmakers should test such a vaccine, István Hollik said in a statement. He added that if Fekete-Győr had “humanity, fairness and courage,” he would apologise swiftly for the remark.

**FILM, DRAMA UNIVERSITY  
TO BE SHUT DOWN  
UNTIL FEB 1**

The supervisory board of the foundation overseeing Budapest’s University of Theatre and Film Arts (SZFE) has ordered the institution to be shut down from Monday until Feb 1, citing unsuitable conditions for continuing classes, enforcing and protecting student rights and ensuring academic autonomy. “The supervisory board of the foundation has determined that under the current situation, conditions for organising classes, enforcing and safeguarding student rights, ensuring a safe work environment as well as the university’s academic autonomy cannot be met,” a letter addressed to SZFE’s students and staff and posted on the university’s website said. Because the completion of credits for the courses students had registered for at the start of the autumn semester of the current academic year cannot be verified, the university is not in the position to recognise the credits, the letter, signed by Chancellor Gábor Szarka and acting deputy rector Emil Novák said.

The supervisory board of the Theatre and Film Foundation has asked the SZFE’s leadership to inform the university’s citizens on its decisions and take the necessary steps for extending the academic year. Students should also be given an opportunity to complete their first-semester subjects in the next semesters, it added. The foundation said a blockade of SZFE’s buildings by students and teachers since early September had prevented the university’s recently appointed leadership from entering the buildings and overseeing the teaching taking place at the institution.

The letter said students and teachers had declined talks with the university’s leadership. It said the decision to temporarily shut down the institution would not lead to the suspension of the students’ legal status with the university, neither would it affect student employment contracts or student loan contracts. Students will not be required to make tuition payments until Feb 1 and may decide whether they want to be refunded the payments they have made this semester or have them be counted towards the spring semester, the letter said.

