

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Sándor Ulvári

Santa observing coronavirus regulations

UPCOMING EVENTS

Lawmakers meet in special part session

Stats office releases Oct inflation data

Coronavirus updates

Parliament's national cohesion committee meets

TOP STORY

GOVT TO INTRODUCE TOUGHER VIRUS RESTRICTIONS

Hungary's government is introducing tougher restrictive measures in an effort to curb the spread of coronavirus as hospitals may struggle to handle the growing case load, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said on Facebook.

If granted special powers in a parliamentary vote on Tuesday, the government will extend the curfew introduced earlier to be in force between 8pm and 5am, and restrict opening hours of shops and other businesses starting at midnight on Tuesday, in measures similar to those in force in Austria, Orbán said. The measures will be imposed for 30 days, and will be reassessed afterwards, he said. All gatherings will be prohibited and restaurants will be closed except for home deliveries, he said. Company canteens will stay open. Shops and services such as hair salons will have to close at 7pm, and hotels will only be allowed to receive business travellers but no tourists. No more than ten people will be allowed to gather at private events or family gatherings, and sporting events will be held behind closed doors.

Universities and secondary schools above the eighth grade will return to digital education while facilities for children under the age of 14 will remain open. Hospital employees, school and kindergarten teachers and nursery employees will be tested weekly, Orbán said.

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ORBÁN: GOVT TO PROVIDE RELIEF TO CATERING AND HOSPITALITY SECTOR

In the coming 30 days, the state will reimburse hotels for 80% of the bookings registered before November 8, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said on Facebook, announcing a new round of restrictive measures aimed at curbing the spread of coronavirus. Restaurants and leisure facilities will be exempt from paying contributions after their employees for the next 30 days and the government will take over half of their employees' wage costs, the prime minister said. Employers are only eligible for those allowances, however, if they commit to keeping and paying their employees, he said.

Although hospitals are well-equipped with protective gear and ventilators, and "doctors and nurses are working beyond their strength ... they are also human, and have their limitations," Orbán said. A vaccine is not expected for weeks yet, he added.

Since the start of the pandemic, Hungary has seen 109,000 infections, and Europe 8 million, Orbán said. "We all know it will not be easy. The next weeks will be hard," he said. "But the vaccine is within reach now, we will have to persevere until then ... we will have to take care of the elderly and observe the rules. Let's take care of each other! If we stand together, we will succeed again."

55 CORONAVIRUS FATALITIES, INFECTIONS UP 5,162

Fully 55 patients, mostly elderly with an underlying illness, have died over the past 24 hours, while 5,162 new coronavirus infections have been registered, bringing the total number of infections since the outbreak in the spring to 114,778, koronavirus.gov.hu said. The death toll has risen to 2,493, while 26,161 have made a recovery. There are 86,134 active infections and 6,061 hospitalised patients, 415 on a ventilator. Fully 36,356 people are in official home quarantine, while the number of tests carried out stands at 1,225,399.

The government has restored the "special legal order", allowing it to take fast action.

So far most people have been registered in Budapest (28,722) and Pest County (14,851), followed by the counties of Győr-Moson-Sopron (8,048), Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (6,836) and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (6,015). Tolna County has the fewest infections (1,379).

SZIJJÁRTÓ HAILS PROGRESS IN RUSSIA VACCINE TALKS

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó has welcomed "another step forward" in negotiations between a Hungarian pharmaceutical company and Russian authorities concerning

production of a vaccine against the novel coronavirus. Szijjártó called Monday's teleconference between the Hungarian producer and the Russian health ministry and Russia's direct investment fund "constructive and positive" and said that production of the new vaccine in Hungary was dependent on Russia's "actual research and production requirements", which would soon be released to the aspirant company. The minister is in home quarantine with Covid-19 symptoms.

BUDAPEST MAYOR WELCOMES NEW RESTRICTIONS

Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony has welcomed the new restrictive measures aimed at curbing the spread of coronavirus in Hungary announced by the prime minister, adding, however, that they should have been introduced sooner. "The measures announced by the prime minister are necessary and warranted," Karácsony said on Facebook. "But they would have been necessary and warranted earlier, since the government had already lost control of the epidemic weeks ago." The Budapest Municipal Council will implement the measures, he said, adding that the capital's operative board in charge of handling the epidemic was scheduled to meet later on Monday.

Karácsony also said that he "cannot ignore that the government's foolish political attacks only make it harder to defend against the virus." "One good

example of this is that the government has just announced a testing programme that it called the Municipal Council 'stupid' for proposing just a day ago," the mayor added. Karácsony said he was glad the government was implementing the measures proposed by the city council and getting ready to test school and kindergarten teachers and nursery employees. He added that the capital would further expand its coronavirus testing capacities, as it did not consider the government's to be adequate.

OPPOSITION PARTIES SUBMIT JOINT ANTI- EPIDEMIC PROPOSAL TO PARLIAMENT

The parliamentary groups of opposition parties are submitting a joint proposal for measures to help the fight against the novel coronavirus pandemic, the parties' representatives said. László Varju of the Democratic Coalition (DK) told an online press conference held jointly with Jobbik, Párbeszéd, the Socialists and LMP that the government was "clearly unable to stop the spread of the virus and handle the crisis". The opposition parties' 11-point proposal includes free-of-charge mass testing for all Hungarian citizens and emergency government assistance to pensioners and families raising children, he said. László Lukács of Jobbik said health-care and social workers, teachers, patients and residents of social care

homes should be screened every two weeks. The proposal also calls for effective contact tracing in order to protect as many people as possible, he added. Olivio Kocsis-Cake of Párbeszéd said the proposal calls for a 100% wage supplement for health workers and Tamás Harangozó of the Socialists said people infected with coronavirus and those forced to stay in quarantine should receive sickness benefits equalling their salaries. Antal Csárdi of LMP said the state should support preparing the conditions for home office, including the purchase of infrastructure and equipment. He also said the proposal includes more effective support for part-time work.

MEDICAL CHAMBER: GOVT RESTRICTIONS 'IMPORTANT'

The Hungarian Medical Chamber's board has said that the government's restrictions announced to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus were "important and more than timely". In a statement the chamber asked members of the public to observe the regulations "in an exemplary manner demonstrated during the spring". Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said on Facebook on Monday that the government would tighten measures in an effort to curb the spread of coronavirus as hospitals might struggle to handle the growing case load. He announced several restrictions to fight the spread of the virus.

GOVT OFFICIAL SLAMS TEACHERS' UNION FOR 'HINDERING PROTECTION EFFORTS'

A government official on Monday lambasted teachers' union PDSZ, saying they were "trying to thwart [coronavirus] protection efforts" when calling on parents to keep their children home from school and kindergarten. PDSZ issued a statement over the weekend, asking parents to keep their children home from public education institutes if they can due to the coronavirus epidemic. Zoltán Maruzsa, the state secretary for education, said PDSZ had "called for a boycott of the end of school exams in the spring". It is not in the children's interest to stay at home, and fall behind in school, he said. Schools where the virus has appeared will be closed and return to digital education, he said, adding that "stoking panic" and keeping individual children away from schools and kindergartens that are not infected is not part of the solution. Maruzsa called on PDSZ to "at least stop hindering protection efforts if they cannot help."

BRITISH AMBASSADOR: UK AIMS TO STRENGTHEN TIES WITH HUNGARY AFTER BREXIT

The United Kingdom aims to strengthen its ties with Hungary as it leaves the European Union, especially

in the security and economic sectors and through interpersonal ties, Paul Fox, the UK's new Ambassador to Hungary, told public broadcaster Kossuth Rádió. Rather than letting bilateral ties wither, both countries have a vested interest in strengthening them by increasing the number of major British investors in Hungary, the ambassador said. There is a lot the two countries can do together to fight climate change, Fox said.

Developing ties in education is also an important objective, he said.

Hungary and the UK are working to ensure that after the transitional period following Brexit, conditions of travel, study and work do not change for Hungarian citizens in the UK and vice versa, he said. Such an arrangement is conditional on a comprehensive agreement with the EU, he added.

The United Kingdom has already registered over 100,000 Hungarians working there, the ambassador said, and added that Britons working in Hungary would soon receive information on new regulations affecting them.

Fox was appointed Ambassador to Hungary in September 2020.

LMP: RESTRICTIONS ANNOUNCED BY ORBÁN NECESSARY BUT 'COME LATE'

The restrictions announced by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán are necessary and deserve support but they come late, opposition LMP group leader

László Lóránt Keresztes said. He told an online press conference that additional restrictions beyond those announced by Orbán were needed to protect people's health and keep the economy functional. He demanded free-of-charge virus screening for all Hungarian citizens and more effective contact tracing, as well as making health services free to all, regardless of whether they have social insurance.

He also said support was needed to create conditions for home office and people who lose their jobs must be granted immediate support. A one-off 500,000 forint (EUR 1,350) wage supplement should also be paid to social workers and teachers should be eligible, he added. He said LMP would support all measures that help the fight against the pandemic but called on the government to stop its "hate campaign" against opposition politicians. He also called on the cabinet to handle professional organisations, interest representation bodies and local municipalities as partners.

JUSTICE MINISTER: HUNGARY JUDICIARY AS EFFICIENT AS 'EUROPE ELITE'

The efficiency of Hungary's judicial system "is on par with that of the European elite", Justice Minister Judit Varga said on Facebook. The Hungarian government has made significant steps toward digitalising the judiciary, with 50% of civil and commercial suits

initiated online, the minister said following an online conference with her European counterparts. Varga said that residents now had access to online information on the status of proceedings, and did no longer need to "travel across the country to give a testimony".

OFFICIAL: POLAND, HUNGARY PREFER TAKING HUMANITARIAN HELP WHERE NEEDED OVER MIGRATION

The Polish and Hungarian governments believe that providing help where it is needed, rather than taking in migrants, is the most effective form of humanitarian assistance, the state secretary in charge of aiding persecuted Christians told a panel discussion at the second Hungarian-Polish Forum. Referring to a memorandum on aiding persecuted Christians signed by Poland and Hungary in August, Tristan Azbej told the online event that the reason why the two countries were successful when it comes to humanitarian policy was because they shared similar worldviews. "Both Hungarians and Poles believe in general human solidarity and humanitarian principles," he said. Neither government sees migration as the solution to the world's problems but rather, both believe that help should be taken to the points where the problems arise, the state secretary added.

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The Polish-Hungarian humanitarian initiative "is often accused by the West of limiting its focus to just Christians", Azbej said. He said the two countries were prepared to provide humanitarian assistance to any group in need, adding, at the same time, that Christians were the world's most persecuted religious group. "But not only do international organisations ignore this phenomenon, they even deny its existence," Azbej said.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SLAMS BUDAPEST 'RE- START TAX'

The head of the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MKIK) has slammed a proposal of the Budapest municipality to raise the business tax from 2% to 2.5%, a measure designed to help restart the city's economy amid the coronavirus pandemic. In an interview in the daily Magyar Nemzet, László Parragh said the municipality had not consulted entrepreneurs' organisations and the chambers before developing the proposal. Parragh said the raise would "levy a tariff on the companies still operational [amid the pandemic] that keep the economy afloat". The city should use its own

resources to pay operational costs, he said, referring to Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony's earlier statement that the ensuing revenue would be used to ensure the 2021 wage increase for municipality employees. Parragh said increasing the business tax rate would require amending the relevant legislation. "The city leadership should consult with the government, which will hopefully decline to support a tax raise in the present situation," he added. As companies are already facing hardship due to the pandemic, increased taxation could lead to layoffs in the short term and to an exodus of companies from Budapest in the long run, Parragh said, and called on the Budapest authority to support companies rather than increasing their burdens.

BUDGET DEFICIT REACHES HUF 2,604 BN AT END OCT

Hungary's budget deficit, excluding local councils, reached 2,604.2 billion forints (EUR 7.2bn) at the end of October, the finance ministry said in a preliminary release of data. The central budget deficit reached 2,140 billion forints, the social insurance funds were 489.9 billion in the red and

separate state funds had a 25.7 billion surplus. The deficit has swelled this year because of pandemic defence spending, economic stimulus and pre-financing for European Union-funded projects. The deficit rose from 2,270.3 billion forints at the end of September.

BUDAPEST TO HOST NEXT YEAR'S MTV EUROPE MUSIC AWARDS, TOO

Budapest will host next year's MTV Europe Music Awards, it was revealed at the annual contest on Sunday, co-hosted by the Hungarian capital and London. Hungarian supermodel Barbara Palvin and French DJ-producer David Guetta emceed the MTV EMA from Budapest. The capital's Széchenyi spa was the backdrop for a performance of Guetta's hit Let's Love with the British singer-songwriter Raye, and the Hungarian cities of Veszprém and Esztergom had cameos in the online show. The MTV EMA has been broadcast from cities in Europe since 1994. It now draws a television and online audience of around one billion people in 180 countries. Budapest was the first city in the region to co-host the event.