

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zsolt Czeglédi

Coronavirus inoculation at the Kenézy Hospital in Debrecen, E Hungary

UPCOMING EVENTS

Coronavirus updates

Presser on job protection scheme

TOP STORY

HUNGARY BEGINS VACCINATING HEALTH-CARE STAFF

Hungary began inoculating its health-care workers against Covid-19 using the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on Saturday. The first vaccine was administered by János Szlávik, head of infectology at Budapest's South Pest Central Hospital.

The first shipment of Pfizer-BioNTech's vaccine, which arrived in Hungary early on Saturday, contained 9,750 doses, enough to inoculate 4,875 health-care workers. Szlávik said Hungary was set to receive larger quantities of the vaccine later. He said numerous studies had affirmed the safety of the vaccine, adding, at the same time, that it may come with the same side effects experienced after other shots like pain at the point of injection, a slight temperature the day after receiving the vaccine or muscle aches. The health authorities will be extremely cautious in the case of vaccine recipients who in the past have suffered a severe allergic reaction or shock after consuming certain foods or beverages, he added. Human Resources Minister Miklós Kásler also welcomed the arrival of the vaccine. "Though we still have to wait to begin mass vaccinations, today we took a significant step in terms of curbing the epidemic," he said. The first vaccine shipment crossed Hungary's border with Austria and was transported to Budapest's South Pest Central Hospital under police guard.

Hungary Matters is an English-language newsletter produced and distributed by the Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA) with content provided by Duna Media Service Provider exercises copyright over all content. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, redistributed or transmitted without prior written permission from the publisher, with the exception of copies made by individuals for private use, educational purposes or scholarly research, provided that such transmissions do not exceed the extent justified by the purpose and are not aimed at financial gain, even indirectly, and the source name are indicated at all times.

All rights reserved. Enquiries should be made to the English Help Desk at +361 441 9340
For MTI's real time coverage please visit <http://english.mti.hu>, <http://econews.hu>



ORBÁN CONGRATULATES NEW ROMANIA PM, PLEDGES HUNGARY'S SUPPORT

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has sent a letter of congratulation to Florin Cîțu, Romania's newly elected prime minister, and assured him of Hungary's support. Orbán said he was convinced that cooperation between Hungary and Romania resting on mutual respect would significantly contribute to the two countries' development as well as to boosting the European Union's economic growth and improving the well-being of their citizens. He welcomed that representatives of Romania's Hungarian community have filled important posts in the new government, expressing hope that it will be able to implement all components of its programme. "For my part, I would like to assure you of the Hungarian government's support in further developing ties between our countries, in our international cooperation and in achieving our common goals," Orbán said.

NINETY-SIX CORONAVIRUS FATALITIES, INFECTIONS UP 698

Fully 96 Covid patients, generally elderly and suffering from an underlying illness, died over the past 24 hours, while 698 infected were officially registered, bringing the total number of infections to 316,060, coronavirus.

gov.hu said on Sunday. The death toll has risen to 9,047, while the number of people who have made a recovery has increased to 130,420. The number of active infections stands at 176,593, while there are 6,072 hospitalised Covid patients, 467 on a ventilator. Altogether 24,327 people are in official home quarantine, and the number of tests carried out has risen to 2,610,590. Most infections have been registered in Budapest (60,814) and Pest County (39,784) so far, followed by the counties of Győr-Moson-Sopron (18,481), Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (18,076) and Hajdú-Bihar (17,999). The county least affected by the infection is Tolna (6,092).

ERDŐ: CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY OF 'HOPE, COMFORT'

Christmas is a holiday celebrating hope and consolation, which is "demonstrated most clearly in difficult times", Cardinal Péter Erdő, the head of the Hungarian Catholic Church, told MTI on Thursday. The cardinal said it was "comforting to see that we have been given abilities with which we can fight against new diseases or natural disasters". Concerning the coronavirus pandemic, Erdő said that "there might now be a light at the end of this dark period" and "if we manage to find a drug against the virus it will be a gift from our Creator". Christmas this year has brought "a number of challenges, sacrifice and abnegation" but "fighting hardships and making our loved ones happy may make the holiday especially beautiful", the cardinal said.

FABINY: CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR COULD BE 'RESTRAINED BUT TRUE'

Christmas this year must be celebrated "in a restrained and quiet way" but "an involuntary halt of life could provide us more time for ourselves and for other people, and doing so may allow more time for God, too", Bishop Tamás Fabiny, the head of the Hungarian Lutheran Church, told MTI on Thursday, Christmas Eve. Love for ones we cannot meet this time could be expressed through "a number of gestures" such as telephone calls or letters, Fabiny said. Concerning the coronavirus pandemic, the bishop said that though it inflicted the whole world, Jesus's birth was good tidings for the whole of the world, too. Fabiny said that the enthusiasm of believers attending online services in large numbers during the first wave of the epidemic have now ebbed, because "people are overwhelmed by the broadcasts and quarantine videos flooding them from all directions" and warned that "we must return to the practice of addressing people individually" rather than just "send the message into the air and hope that there will be somebody to listen".

REFORMED CHURCH LEADER SENDS CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Given the pandemic situation, "we will celebrate Christmas with more

modesty and restraint" this year, but "a forced adjustment in our lives" may let us get closer "to discovering the genuine secret of Christmas", the head of the Hungarian Reformed Church's synod said in his message on Thursday, marking Christmas Eve. "This year, we will probably be able to feel how God appeared in the turbulent and restless world of people, how light shone in darkness and how all this gave man hope...", Bishop István Bogárdi Szabó told MTI.

MINISTER: FAMILY SUPPORT SPENDING TO GROW TO HUF 2,600 BN IN 2021

Government support for families will grow to 2,600 billion forints (EUR 7.1m) in 2021, two-and-a-half times the sum allocated to the sector in 2010, the minister without portfolio in charge of families said on Sunday. The government's family protection scheme, which is being continued despite the economic fallout of the coronavirus pandemic, has helped over 220,000 families so far, she told MTI in a statement. Some 130,000 couples have applied for prenatal baby support, and the government has so far allocated 47 billion forints for car purchases of large families, she said. Over 18,000 families have applied for home purchase subsidies, at a total value of 155 billion forints, she said.

In an interview published in the Thursday issue of the daily Magyar Hírlap Katalin Novák welcomed Hungary's "commitment to families". She said that first time home buyers would be provided further assistance from January on, adding that goal was not only to encourage couples to have children but to improve conditions for families as the children grow up. Novák also mentioned that pensioners would be receiving an extra week's pension in January, as the first instalment of 13th month pension to be restored gradually by 2024. Concerning her Fidesz party, Novák referred to the ruling party as "a truly conservative, Christian democratic community bent on promoting truth rather than fighting for power itself."

GOVT OFFICIAL: HUNGARY HELPS AID PROGRAMME SUPPORTS OVER 100,000, AWAITS VOLUNTEERS

The government's Hungary Helps aid programme has so far provided support to more than 100,000 people around the world and is now calling for volunteers, a government official told public broadcaster Kossuth Rádió. The government launched its international aid programme in early 2017 with aiming to help persecuted Christians, Tristan Azbej,

the state secretary responsible for aiding persecuted Christians, said. The programme now calls for volunteers willing to give English classes and holding workshops online to schools and family support centres in Africa or the Middle East, Krisztina Kármán, director of the volunteer programme, told the radio programme. Volunteers would be welcome to travel to the African continent after the pandemic had been contained to help out in hospitals and children's homes, she said, adding that engineers would also be welcome to help with construction projects. Further details are available at onkentes@onkentesliga.hu, she said.

MAN ATTACKING POLICE SHOT IN N BUDAPEST SUBURB

A police officer shot a man who had stabbed his patrol partner in northern Budapest's 4th district, police.hu reported on Wednesday. The two officers, a man and a woman, had been alerted to a condominium with a man behaving aggressively in the stairway. When they arrived the noisy and aggressive man attacked the male officer and stabbed him with a knife several times. The attacker died, while the injured officer was rushed to hospital in a critical condition.

