

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zoltán Mátyás

The Roman amphitheatre in Budapest's 3rd district

UPCOMING EVENTS

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

HEALTH WORKERS TO GET JAB AT 25 LOCATIONS

A total of 2,461 health-care staff at three locations in Budapest and two in the countryside received vaccination against the coronavirus in the past three days, a department head of the National Public Health Centre said.

Ágnes Galgóczi told a press conference of the operative board coordinating response to the epidemic that a new shipment of the vaccine is expected to arrive in Hungary this week, allowing inoculation to continue at 25 locations.

The first shipment of 9,750 doses will be enough to inoculate 4,875 persons (the jab must be repeated 21 days after the first). Commenting on 6,000 ampoules of Russian vaccine that were delivered in Hungary on Monday afternoon, she said they offered an opportunity for scientific cooperation, enabling the Hungarian authorities to assess additional vaccines. Commenting on fake news about Pfizer's vaccine, she said it did not contain the virus or even a part of the virus, only genetic information about the coronavirus's signature spike protein which triggers anti-bodies. "It's not the vaccine that we need to be afraid of, but the risks that come with the infection," she said. The vaccines will be critically important when it comes to protecting the public from the virus, she said, emphasising the need to continue observing Covid-19 health protocols.

GOVT OFFICIAL: VACCINE REGISTRATIONS NEAR 600,000

So far, some 598,000 people in Hungary have registered to be vaccinated against Covid-19, Csaba Dömötör, a state secretary of the Prime Minister's Office, said. Fully 462,000 people have registered for the vaccine on the website vakcinainfo.gov.hu while 136,000 have sent in a registration form by mail, Dömötör said. Because vaccination against Covid-19 is voluntary, it was crucial, he said, that the authorities know who wants to be inoculated. Mass vaccinations against the virus will be carried out under a vaccination plan, he noted, encouraging the public to register for the shot.

DÖMÖTÖR: LEFT WING UNDERMINING VACCINATIONS

A government official has accused the left-wing opposition of attempting to "torpedo" Hungary's vaccination programme. Csaba Dömötör, a parliamentary state secretary of the Prime Minister's Office, said, citing an article in the online edition of Magyar Nemzet that left-wing politicians were talking with brazen openness about why they would "torpedo" the vaccination programme. Dömötör also referred to an article in Politico in which Hungarian opposition figures insisted that Viktor Orbán, the prime

minister, would be at fault if people in Hungary refused to be inoculated. The Democratic Coalition (DK) demanded that the government procure "the safe German-American vaccine approved by the European Union". DK spokesman Balázs Barkóczy said the foreign minister had announced the arrival in Hungary of 6,000 ampoules of Russia's Sputnik vaccine. He insisted that Sputnik had not undergone testing in the EU and had been "widely rejected by the Russian people and scientists".

SZIJJÁRTÓ: RUSSIAN VACCINES USED IN HUNGARY FOR GENERATIONS

Russian vaccines have been used to inoculate most Hungarians since their childhoods, Péter Szijjártó, the foreign minister, said. He said Hungary's track record on vaccinations against infectious diseases was outstanding, mainly down to Russian vaccines. The minister said on Facebook that the government's job was to make sure Hungarians get a safe vaccine, no matter where in the world it was developed. Hungarian doctors and epidemiologists are able to study how the Russian vaccine has been developed and manufactured and members of Hungary's delegation witnessed the use of cutting-edge technology and "the highest level of professional competence", he said. He accused left-wing politicians of questioning the professionalism

of Hungarian doctors and epidemiologists in order to make a political issue out of Russian vaccines.

CORONAVIRUS - 131 FATALITIES, 902 MORE INFECTIONS

Fully 131 Covid patients, generally elderly and suffering from an underlying illness, died over the past 24 hours, while 902 new infections were officially registered, bringing the total number of infected to 317,571, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Tuesday. The death toll has risen to 9,292, while the number of people who have made a recovery has increased to 138,365. The number of active infections stands at 169,914, while there are 6,298 hospitalised Covid patients, 444 on a ventilator. Altogether 21,667 people are in official home quarantine, and the number of tests carried out has risen to 2,621,427. Most infections have been registered in Budapest (61,041) and Pest County (39,909) so far, followed by the counties of Győr-Moson-Sopron (18,521), Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (18,146) and Hajdú-Bihar (18,092). The county least affected by the infection is Tolna (6,172).

ORBÁN OFFERS HUNGARY'S ASSISTANCE TO EARTHQUAKE-HIT CROATIA

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán offered Hungary's support to his Croatian counterpart after a 6.3 magnitude

earthquake hit the southern country, killing several people and injuring at least 20. The earthquake on Tuesday afternoon, which had its epicentre near the town of Petrinja in central Croatia, was the last and strongest of a series of quakes since Monday morning. In his letter, Orbán said he was “saddened to hear about the devastating earthquake near Petrinja and Sisak,” and said Hungary stood by Croatia in these trying days. “We pray for the families of the victims and wish a speedy recovery to those injured,” the letter said. Orbán has also requested “immediate reports” from Hungarian authorities on the domestic impact of the earthquake and the damage caused.

BUDAPEST SUBURBAN RAILWAYS DEVELOPMENT TO RESULT IN BETTER INTEGRATED, FASTER SERVICES

The development of Budapest’s three suburban railway (HÉV) lines connecting the city with Csepel, Ráckeve and Szentendre is in its planning phase, the Budapest transport development centre (BFK) said. The end result will be better integrated and faster services, the centre said. Thanks to an extension of the southern suburban rail lines to Kálvin Square in the city centre, passenger numbers are expected to double, BFK said. The trains will pass underground at Közvágóhíd station, reaching downtown Kálvin Square with a stop at Boráros Square,

allowing the development of a new extended green promenade along the River Danube, it added. Around one million people commute to the city centre from suburban areas every day, and the HÉV development project will also shorten their travel times. On certain external stretches of the HÉV network, trains will travel at up to 100kmh. Balázs Fürjes, the state secretary for the development of Budapest and its agglomeration, said the project was receiving 13.7 billion forints (EUR 38.4m) in non-refundable support co-funded by European Union Cohesion Funds and the Hungarian central budget.

SOCIALIST MEP: SZOMBATHELY BACKS EUROPEAN HEALTH UNION PLAN

The city of Szombathely, in western Hungary, is among the first localities to back the European Commission’s plan to create a European Health Union, Socialist Party MEP István Ujhelyi said. Ujhelyi said the European Union’s next multiannual budget allocates more than 5 billion euros towards health-care programmes, most of which he said should be spent directly on local council schemes. The European Health Union should also cover the development of the health industry, he said, adding that Szombathely was poised to be a leader in this field in the coming period. Mihály Kökény, Hungary’s former health minister, who heads the country’s research on the

European Health Union plan, praised Szombathely’s health-care model, saying it would be “exemplary” when it comes to implementing the EU scheme.

BAKONDI: PANDEMIC, MIGRATION THREATEN HUNGARY, EUROPE SECURITY

For the sixth successive year, no real solution to migration in Europe has emerged, György Bakondi, the prime minister’s chief domestic security adviser said. Bakondi said countries that failed to toe the European Union’s line faced major political pressure. Referring to financier George Soros, he said the so-called “Soros Plan” was being incorporated into the EU draft legislation. The European Commission’s new migration action plan, he said, would legalise migration and provide housing, social benefits, citizenship and voting rights to 34 million migrants. The PM’s security adviser said that in 2020 there was a big increase in the number of illegal migrants and a close link between illegal migration and organised crime. He insisted that in parallel, “the Soros network” had been “highly active”, particularly in the second half of the year, when “more and more open political action was taken”. Bakondi accused “the Soros network” and left-liberal forces of lobbying for the withdrawal of EU funding to countries that refused to follow the EU’s stance on migration. The government, he

added, successfully prevented this. The government, he said, would continue to pursue its "proven migration policy" in 2021. The aims, he added, were to ensure domestic and border security, and protect national sovereignty. Hungary will oppose endeavours to promote immigration, such as the resettlement quota system, and cooperate with like-minded countries, he said. Hungary will also continue to assist European border control efforts and provide aid to troubled countries through its Hungary Helps programme, he added.

EPIDEMIC NO OBSTACLE TO TRANSFORMING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The transformation of vocational training in Hungary has not been hindered by the coronavirus epidemic, a state secretary of the ministry of innovation and technology said in Magyar Nemzet. The government spent 35 billion forints (EUR 98m) this year to increase the wages of 32,000 teachers involved in vocational education, and it plans to spend 11 billion forints each year on new scholarships, Tamás Schanda said. Also, several tens of billions of forints have been allocated to developing vocational training centres and workshops, he added. Commenting on the effects of introducing digital

education as a result of the epidemic, he said schools were allowed to decide for themselves how to ensure a safe environment.

GOVT TO SPEND HUF 2.5 BN ON AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMME IN 2021

The Hungarian government will next year allocate 2.5 billion forints (EUR 6.9m) to supporting the country's after-school programme designed to help disadvantaged families, the directorate for social equality said. Hungary's 183 after-school programmes, started some 20 years ago, help children in disadvantaged localities and households to keep up with school requirements, as well as helping secondary school students in choosing a profession and working on building a community, the statement said. After-school programmes are helping over 5,000 children currently, it said.

BUDAPEST AIRPORT ACCREDITED FOR INTL AVIATION RESTART PROGRAMME

The Airport Council International (ACI) has said that Budapest's Liszt Ferenc International Airport has fulfilled the health-care and sanitation requirements to participate in its Business Aviation

Restart and Recovery programme. The programme aims to help the restart of international air travel by encouraging epidemiological measures and sharing experience among air travel organisations, airport operator Budapest Airport said. Liszt Ferenc International received 16.2 million passengers in 2019. That number is expected to be around 4 million in 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the airport said in a statement. To ensure passengers' safety, the airport has introduced regular disinfecting cleaning, hand sanitisers and contactless baggage drop-off. It has also set up a testing centre and is making sure that passengers adhere to social distancing guidelines, the statement said.

BUDAPEST SEES INCREASE IN VACANT PREMISES

The number of vacant commercial properties in Budapest increased in the second half of the year, with many permanent closures -- mainly restaurants or entertainment venues -- due to the pandemic, business daily Világgazdaság said. There are 15-20% more vacant retail spaces in the capital than a year ago and there has been a 20-25% increase downtown, the paper said, quoting kiberelem.hu data. But just as with the housing market, retail properties are expected to start making a recovery in 2021.