

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV Zoltán Máthé

First shipment of China's Sinopharm vaccine arrives in Hungary

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Coronavirus updates**

**Visegrad Group heads of govt meet in Krakow**

**National election committee meets**

**20MW solar park opens in N Hungary**

## TOP STORY

# FIVE VACCINES AVAILABLE IN HUNGARY WITH SINOPHARM DELIVERY

The first shipment of vaccines from china has arrived, so five vaccines are now available in Hungary, according to a Hungarian health authority official.

The 550,000 doses of vaccine received on Tuesday are enough to vaccinate 275,000 people, Ágnes Galgóczi, the head of the epidemiology department of the National Public Health Centre (NNK), told an online briefing of the operative board responsible for containing the coronavirus epidemic. Vaccinations using the Sinopharm jab will be available once NNK has tested and authorised it for general use. The Sinopharm jabs will be administered by general practitioners. Hungary this week is also receiving 102,960 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine in two shipments on Tuesday and Wednesday. Galgóczi noted that people in the oldest age group will receive the Pfizer and Sputnik V shots at the various vaccination points, while those under the age of 60 with underlying illnesses will be administered the AstraZeneca vaccine. Teams are also returning to several nursing homes, while second-round jabs of health workers will continue. She encouraged the public to get inoculated and asked them to only turn to reliable sources when seeking out information on the vaccines.

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>



## **HUNGARY REPORTS 85 CORONAVIRUS FATALITIES, 823 NEW INFECTIONS**

Fully 85 Covid patients, generally elderly and suffering from an underlying illness, died over the past 24 hours, while 823 new infections were officially registered, bringing the total number of infected to 389,622, [koronavirus.gov.hu](http://koronavirus.gov.hu) said. The death toll has risen to 13,837, while 298,773 people have made a recovery. The number of active infections has declined to 77,012, while there are 3,979 hospitalised Covid patients, 318 on a ventilator. Altogether 20,224 people are in official home quarantine, and the number of tests carried out has risen to 3,394,648. Fully 341,958 people have been vaccinated so far, with 131,593 having received the second jab. Hospital vaccinations using the Pfizer and Sputnik vaccines will continue this week and GPs are vaccinating people below the age of 60 with underlying illnesses with AstraZeneca vaccine. Teams are also returning to several nursing homes, while second-round jabs of health workers will continue.

The government has extended coronavirus-related restrictions until March 1.

Most infections have been registered in Budapest (72,532) and Pest County (48,833) so far, followed by the counties of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (21,970), Hajdú-Bihar (21,866) and Győr-Moson-Sopron (21,644). The county least affected by the infection is Tolna (8,668).

## **OFFICIAL: HUNGARY TARGETS 70% VACCINATION RATE BY JUNE**

With the government working to procure as many Covid-19 vaccines as possible, Hungary could have 70% of its population inoculated by June, a government official said. Achieving this target would give Hungary one of the highest vaccination rates in the European Union, allowing it to lift restrictions and reopen its economy earlier than other countries, justice ministry state secretary Pál Völner said in a parliamentary debate on extending the special legal order introduced to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Hungary's use of the Chinese and Russian Covid vaccines will allow it to vaccinate 3.5 million more people by the end of May than if it relied solely on jabs procured by Brussels, Völner said. Citing expert opinions, the state secretary said virus restrictions should remain in place for the time being, but expressed hope that they could be eased in the foreseeable future.

## **ORBÁN HAS TALKS WITH DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF UZBEKISTAN**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán met Uzbekistan's Deputy Prime Minister Sardor Umurzakov in his office and discussed protection against the coronavirus epidemic and developing

economic links, Orbán's press chief said.

Orbán expressed thanks for Uzbekistan's cooperation in the efforts against the epidemic which involved sending 650,000 protective masks to Hungary in the spring, Bertalan Havasi said. At the same time, Hungary helped Uzbek citizens return home after the outbreak of the pandemic, he added. The sides were in agreement that it is worth investing in the development of Hungarian-Uzbek economic ties. Hungary can participate in water management and renewable energy projects, the modernisation of the electricity network, and agricultural investments, such as building food processing capacities, he said. Uzbekistan has 50 years of experience in the peaceful utilisation of nuclear energy and it is the world's seventh largest uranium supplier, he added. The talks also covered exchange schemes in education and Orbán said that Hungary had offered scholarships at Hungarian universities to 100 Uzbek students annually until the end of 2023. Umurzakov is in Budapest to attend the 6th co-chairmen's meeting of the Hungarian-Uzbek economic cooperation intergovernmental committee.

## **CORONAVIRUS - MI HAZÁNK AGAINST MAINTAINING LOCKDOWN**

The extra-parliamentary Mi Hazánk party does not support extending Covid-related restrictions, Dóra Dúró,

the party's deputy leader, told a press conference.

She insisted that the lockdown measures were "unreasonable, inconsistent, and in many cases counter-productive", arguing that shops forced to close at 7pm increased crowdedness in the afternoon.

Dúró criticised measures that allowed "casinos and shopping malls generally filled with the outlets of multinationals" to remain open, while restaurants typically operated by small or medium-size companies were forced to be closed. Mi Hazánk wants the curfew to be lifted and opening hours of shops extended, she said. Dúró said she was puzzled by the lockdown covering open-air game parks and zoos, as well as at the ban on open-air sports around residential homes.

### **SZIJJÁRTÓ: INDONESIAN INVESTMENT BIGGEST HUNGARIAN TECH EXPORT SO FAR**

A 103 billion forint (EUR 287m) electronic road toll system to be built in Indonesia by Hungarian company Roatex will be Hungary's biggest technology export so far, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said in Jakarta. Szijjártó told a press conference that the project, expected to be completed by 2023, was a "milestone" in Hungary's foreign economic strategy. He said that 70% of the "technology and skills" for the project would be Hungarian. Indonesia

has 2,500kms of highways, and this is expected to rise to 4,800kms, he added. He said Indonesia was an important element of Hungary's strategy of opening up to the East which started 11 years ago. The minister added that there were no unresolved issues to burden bilateral relations.

Talks are under way concerning a 50 million dollar subsidised loan programme under which Hungarian companies would build a meteorological and climate monitoring system in Indonesia, the minister said.

Szjijártó noted that Hungary offered scholarships to Indonesian students, adding that 1,200 were interested in studying at Hungarian universities and colleges this year. Currently 13 Hungarian universities are in cooperation with 23 Indonesian institutions, he said, adding that in view of high demand the Hungarian government was ready to increase the number of scholarships offered. Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi noted two agreements were signed during the talks, one aimed at stepping up diplomatic capacities, and another designed to facilitate a 500 million dollar Indonesia-Hungary investment fund to finance future developments, including digitisation and public infrastructure projects. She said bilateral trade turnover was 212 million dollars in 2020, up 13% from the previous year.

The two ministers also agreed that their countries would make bilateral

trade more balanced and sustainable in the long run, to which end a central warehouse for Indonesian products would be set up in Budapest.

### **JUSTICE MINISTER MARKS 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF VISEGRAD GROUP**

The Visegrad Declaration, signed by Hungarian Prime Minister József Antal, Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel and Polish President Lech Walesa on 15 February 1991, laid the cornerstone for 30 years of cooperation in central Europe, Justice Minister Judit Varga said on Monday.

Varga said on Facebook that thanks to the V4 alliance, the region has become the engine and fastest-growing area of the European economy in 30 years. She added that the Visegrad Four was more than just an economic grouping, but it is a community of values closely linked by Christian culture, national sovereignty, history and respect for traditions. "In recent years, the Visegrad Group has been able to offer a definite and strong alternative to the utopia of the United States of Europe, boldly advocating the idea of a Europe of Nations," she said. "Together, we stopped immigration, defended our borders and put Central Europe on the world map, in both economic and political terms. We have said together that instead of more Europe, we want a smarter Europe, which must be based on respect for nation-states and Treaties," she added.

---

## **HUNGARY, POLAND SIGN MILITARY COOPERATION AGREEMENT IN BUDAPEST**

Defence ministry representatives from Hungary and Poland signed a bilateral military cooperation agreement in Budapest. Hungarian Defence Minister Tibor Benkő met Polish counterpart Mariusz Błaszczak and his delegation who are on an official visit in Budapest. Benkő said at a joint press conference that relations between the four members of the Visegrad Group and especially between Hungary and Poland were increasingly growing stronger. Developing closer ties between Hungarian and Polish soldiers makes cooperation more effective and successful, he added.

Answering a question, Błaszczak said that the cooperation agreement covered the areas of training, military drills, as well as nurturing historical ties and traditions. Benkő highlighted joint military exercises of the special forces and the utilisation of experiences gained from training and preparing reserve soldiers.

---

## **SOLTÉSZ: ETHNIC MINORITY CULTURE, EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO RECEIVE HUF 1.4 BN THIS YEAR**

Public educational and cultural institutions maintained by local ethnic self-governments will receive central funding of 1.36 billion forints this year, Miklós Soltész, the state secretary for

Church and ethnic minority relations, said.

National minorities, he said, formed a natural part of the Hungarian nation. "It's important they survive and pass down their language and culture," he said. The government, he added, had recognised this by increasing state funding for national minorities fivefold over ten years while handing over institutions to be run autonomously.

While in 2010 there were only five public educational institutions managed by local ethnic self-governments, there are now around 60, he said.

The government is providing support for renovations involving 60 institutions in 13 counties, he said, adding that 55 institutions maintained by German, one by Croatian and four by Slovak national minorities will be refurbished in 2021.

---

## **MINISTRY ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO SECONDARY SCHOOL FINAL EXAM REQUIREMENTS**

Hungary's public education system will introduce changes to the secondary school general final exam requirements from 2023, placing greater emphasis on creativity and problem-solving skills, the human resources ministry said. The government has recently amended several laws dealing with public education and will now move on to reviewing the secondary school exam requirements, the ministry told MTI.

Among the biggest changes, the focus in several exam subjects will shift to assessment methods requiring creativity and independent problem solving, the ministry said, naming project assignments as an example. In line with the new national curriculum introduced in 2020, this will lead to changes in the way these subjects are taught, it said. The new requirements will be introduced in the autumn exam period of the 2023/24 school year, the ministry said.

---

## **HUNGARY GDP DOWN 5.1% YR/YR IN 2020**

Hungary's economy in 2020 declined by an annual 5.1%, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said, based on a first estimate. GDP grew by 1.1% in the fourth quarter last year compared with the previous quarter and fell by 3.7% compared with the same period of the previous year. According to seasonally and calendar-adjusted data, the economy's performance declined by an annual 4.3% in the fourth quarter. Industry and the IT and communication sectors contributed the most to growth, the KSH said.

Finance Minister Mihály Varga said in a video on Facebook that the government was mulling further developments to the tune of "several thousand billion forints", adding that his ministry was expecting the economy to return to a growth path in the second quarter this year and "produce a two-digit growth" in the period. Varga noted the economy's

resilience and the government's economic protection measures, adding that Hungary's recession of 5.1% in 2020 had been smaller than expected, and below the European Union average of 6.4%. He also noted that Hungary had outperformed Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, and the Czech Republic.

Analysts polled by MTI hailed the Q4 growth figure, saying that the economy had much greater recovery potential than expected, which foreshadowed a rebound in 2021, the magnitude of which would be determined by the speed at which restrictions were eased.

ING Bank chief analyst Péter Virovác said the Q4 figure was a "huge surprise, exceeding the most optimistic forecasts". The 1.1% figure was "more dynamic than the full year average", with a positive impact on 2021 as a whole, he said.

Gábor Regős, head of Századvég's macroeconomic division, said the growth was surprising in light of restrictions introduced in November. He said it appeared that most sectors had done as well or even better than in the last quarter of 2019, "signalling a fast recovery".

**FINANCE MINISTER  
DISCUSSES RECOVERY  
WITH BANKING SECTOR  
LEADERS**

Finance Minister Mihály Varga met banking sector leaders to discuss tools

lenders can use to support Hungary's economic recovery.

In a post on his Facebook page, Varga said he met Hungarian Banking Association chairman Radovan Jelasity, deputy chairman András Becsei and chief secretary Levente Kovács. "We discussed what tools financial institutions can use to support the jump-start of the Hungarian economy," Varga said.

He acknowledged banks' cooperation involving a blanket moratorium on loan repayments during the coronavirus crisis, their 55 billion forint (EUR 153m) extraordinary contribution to Hungary's pandemic war chest, and their active corporate lending. "The coronavirus pandemic has proved that Hungarian financial institutions can be counted on in difficult times, too," Varga said.

**HUNGARIAN, UZBEK  
AGRICULTURE MINISTERS  
MEET IN BUDAPEST**

Hungarian Agriculture Minister István Nagy met his Uzbek counterpart Jamshid Khodjaev in Budapest . The sides were joined by Balázs Györfly, the chairman of the National Agriculture Chamber (NAK), the agriculture ministry said. Nagy said at the meeting that Hungary is ready to step up cooperation with Uzbekistan in agriculture, especially in the areas of cattle and poultry farming. He added that partnerships could be established involving seeds and aquaculture. Hungary can play a key

role in supporting Uzbekistan's efforts to become self-sufficient in livestock farming, he said. Hungarian companies could benefit from involvement in the processing of Uzbek raw materials, he added. Nagy and Khodjaev signed a memorandum of understanding that will create more opportunities for Hungarian food companies and farmers.

**OFFICIAL: SLOVENIA  
CONFIRMS PARTICIPATION  
AT HUNTING, NATURE  
EXPO**

Slovenia has confirmed it will participate in the international hunting and nature expo to be hosted by Budapest between Sept. 25 and Oct. 14, the state secretary in charge of international communications and relations said on. Zoltán Kovács held talks in Ljubljana with Slovenia's Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Joze Podgrosek. Slovenian organisations involved in forestry, hunting and the food industry will participate in the expo, and the minister will attend its opening event, Kovács told MTI by phone.

Slovenia will take over the rotating European Union presidency from July this year, and sustainability will be a top priority, he said. By the end of 2020, some 50 countries had expressed their interest in participating in the expo dubbed One with Nature - World of Hunting and Nature Exhibition, he added.

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.



## EP'S EUROPEAN CITIZENS' PRIZE GOES TO CHARITY ORGANISATION, DOMINICAN SISTER

The European Parliament has recognised Hungary's Oltalom Charity Association and Dominican sister Laura Baritz with its European Citizens' Prize for 2021.

Baritz was founder of the postgraduate course Christian social principles in the economy at the Sapientia College of Theology of Religious Orders. She teaches economics at Budapest's Corvinus University and presents a programme on Christian station Mária Rádió. She was nominated for the prize by György Hölvenyi, MEP of Hungary's co-ruling Christian Democrats.

Oltalom, headed by pastor Gábor Iványi, has provided material and spiritual assistance to vulnerable

children, the homeless, the sick and lonely since 1989. The association was nominated by Csaba Molnár, MEP of the leftist Democratic Coalition. Since 2008, the EP has been awarding the prize to individuals and organisations that have contributed to promoting mutual understanding and tighter integration among EU citizens and member states, or have developed programmes that reflect the bloc's values.

## NAZI VICTIM SOCCER PLAYER COMMEMORATED IN BUDAPEST

István Tóth Potya, a Hungarian soccer player murdered by the Gestapo, was commemorated by the Ambassador of Israel and the Hungarian Jewish community in Budapest on Tuesday. Yacov Hadas-Handelsman, the ambassador, said in the Raoul Wallenberg Memorial Park that Tóth

Potya was an outstanding coach with special skills. "He however carried out his most heroic act in the darkest period of history when during WWII he saved the lives of several hundreds of Jews," the ambassador added. He said "István Tóth Potya was a hero", adding that Israel will always be grateful to people who were standing out "as a lighthouse" during a long dark era of Europe.

András Heisler, the president of the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities (Mazsihisz), said that Tóth Potya had introduced incredible new methods as a coach. Additionally, he saved hundreds of Jews by risking his own life, Heisler said. Historian Péter Szegedi said Tóth Potya played as member of the national eleven and worked later with Italy's Internazionale. He was arrested in the winter of 1944 and taken to the Gestapo. He was murdered in Budapest in February, 1945.