

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Péter Komka

Fog surrounding Somoskő Castle at Hungary-Slovakia border

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**EU foreign ministers meet in Brussels**

**Plenary session of parliament**

**Coronavirus updates**

## TOP STORY

# HUNGARY TO INOCULATE MORE THAN 465,000 OVER TWO WEEKS

Hungary will have enough vaccine to inoculate more than 465,000 people against Covid-19 over a period of two weeks starting on Wednesday, a senior government official has said.

István György, who heads the task force coordinating the vaccine rollout, told public media on Saturday that 275,000 doses of the Sinopharm and AstraZeneca vaccines would be delivered to general practitioners in the coming week. The vaccines will be used to inoculate people with chronic health conditions, although the AstraZeneca one will be limited to people under 60 years of age, he added. General practitioners will also each get ten doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for their patients in the oldest age group, György said. So far 550,000 doses of the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine and 46,000 of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine have arrived in Hungary, he said. Hungary will take delivery of another 500,000 doses of the Chinese vaccine after March 15, he added. Shipments of vaccines from the west continue to arrive at an unpredictable pace, György said.

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## **HOUSE SPEAKER: HUNGARY'S FUTURE HINGES ON 2022 ELECTION WINNER**

The future of Hungary depends on who will win the 2022 general elections, Parliamentary Speaker László Kövér said on commercial broadcaster Inforadio on Friday evening. Kövér said most MPs of governing Fidesz want and can run in the 2022 elections, but added that decisions on candidates had not yet been taken. He said some politicians might be better able to contribute to the campaign on a national level, as central figures.

Kövé said he would gladly continue the "campaign of results" in the run-up to the election, pointing to "successes of which the government can be proud" in the areas of economic policy, employment, family policy and demographic policy. While the government explains the decisions it took and why, Kövé said he expected the opposition to bring a "dirtier, meaner campaign". He added that social media would have a significance in the 2022 election as in none other before. Kövé said he spoke with his Chinese counterpart Li Zhanshu online earlier in the day, adding that Hungary's order for 5 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine from China could mean a breakthrough in the fight against the pandemic. He said the opposition had not contributed to the pandemic defence

in Hungary "even as a gesture". He added that left-wing parties are supporting vaccination in a manner that undermines confidence in the very vaccines which Hungary has at its disposal in large number.

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## **HUNGARY RECORDS 47 COVID-19 FATALITIES, 2,912 NEW INFECTIONS**

Fully 47 Covid patients, generally elderly and suffering from an underlying illness, died over the past 24 hours, while 2,912 new infections were officially registered, bringing the total number of infected to 403,023, [koronavirus.gov.hu](http://koronavirus.gov.hu) said on Sunday. The death toll has risen to 14,299, while 306,621 people have made a recovery. The number of active infections stands at 82,103, while there are 4,233 hospitalised Covid patients, 366 on a ventilator. Altogether 27,179 people are in official home quarantine, and the number of tests carried out has risen to 3,503,611. Fully 445,535 people have been vaccinated so far, with 190,705 having received the second jab.

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

Most infections have been registered in Budapest (75,003) and Pest County (50,692) so far, followed by the counties of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (22,994), Hajdú-Bihar (22,596) and Győr-Moson-Sopron (22,453). The county least affected by the infection is Tolna (9,023).

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## **OVER 200,000 RESPOND TO NATL SURVEY ON LIFTING RESTRICTIONS**

A total of 201,087 people filled out the government's National Consultation survey on possible scenarios for lifting pandemic restrictions by Saturday morning, the government portal [kormany.hu](http://kormany.hu) said. In the survey, launched a few days earlier, the government is seeking the public's views on whether restrictions should be lifted gradually or in a single go when the pandemic situation allows, and whether restrictions should be eased for people with immunity to the coronavirus. So far, 2,265,000 Hungarians have registered to be vaccinated.

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## **MEDIA WATCHDOG RESPONDS TO EC LETTER CONCERNING KLUBRÁDIÓ**

National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH) chair Monika Karas on Friday said there is no legal means at present to allow Klubrádió to provide media services temporarily in a letter responding to the European Commission. In the letter addressed to Roberto Viola, the EC's DG for communications networks, content and technology, Karas said neither EU law nor Hungarian regulations allow for Klubrádió to provide media services temporarily. "Nor can it be in the Commission's interest to pursue

a procedure that runs contrary to regulations and to the principle of equal treatment, as that would not comply with the criteria of the rule of law, which is important to all of us," she wrote in the letter which was also forwarded to MTI. NMHH's Media Council earlier refused Klubádió's request to continue providing media services on the 92.9 MHz frequency in Budapest because of repeated infringements that the broadcaster had not appealed. Karas noted in the letter that the Media Council had called a new tender for the 92.9 MHz frequency from which Klubrádió was not excluded. She added that Klubrádió enjoys an advantage in the tender because it earlier broadcast on the frequency. Klubrádió has been registered for the tender as the sole bidder remaining in the procedure.

### **POPE FRANCIS VISITS HUNGARIAN HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR**

Pope Francis paid a personal visit to the home in Rome of Edith Bruck, a Hungarian writer who survived the Holocaust, the office of the spokesman of the Holy See said on Saturday. During the hour-long visit, the two spoke about the time Bruck had spent in the concentration camps, as well as about the fears and hopes of the present, and the importance of remembering the past as well as the role played in that matter by the elderly. Pope Francis visited the 89-year-old Bruck after

reading an interview with her in L'Osservatore Romano published on the occasion of Holocaust Memorial Day. Andrea Monda, editor-in-chief of L'Osservatore Romano, accompanied him on the visit. Pope Francis "asked forgiveness from the Lord in the name of humanity" and thanked Bruck for her testimony, Monda said. Bruck, born in Tiszakarád in 1932, was deported with her family and spent time in the concentration camps of Auschwitz, Dachau and Bergen-Belsen. Her parents and brother died in Dachau, but she and her sister survived. After 1945, she lived in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Israel. In 1954, she immigrated to Italy, where she moved in the circles of the country's best known literary figures and formed a friendship with Primo Levi, another Holocaust survivor. Bruck has translated works by a number of Hungarian authors, including Attila József, Miklós Radnóti and Gyula Illyés, into Italian.

### **DÖMÖTÖR: HUNGARY'S REPAYMENT MORATORIUM LONGEST IN EUROPE**

Hungary's moratorium on loan repayments is longer than in any other country in Europe, state secretary Csaba Dömötör said in a video message posted on Facebook on Saturday. He noted that the blanket moratorium, among the government's first coronavirus crisis relief measures, runs for 15 months.

Dömötör said more than half of Hungary's 2.7 million borrowers had availed of the moratorium. In addition to families, the measure has helped over half a million Hungarian businesses, he added.

### **SOCIALIST MEP URGES GOVT TO APPLY FOR EU SURE SUPPORT**

Socialist MEP István Ujhelyi on Saturday called on the government to apply for 1 billion euros of support from the European Union's SURE fund to provide wage support in sectors that have been hit hardest by the coronavirus crisis. At an online press conference, Ujhelyi said the government's latest national consultation survey on the possible ways epidemic restrictions could be lifted is "uncalled for" and "a waste of time". Instead of conducting a consultation, he said, the government should provide immediate support to the more than 600,000 people who work in services, catering, culture and tourism. Hungary could apply for as much as 1 billion euros in support for those people through the EU's SURE programme, he added.

### **DK CALLS FOR INOCULATION OF KINDERGARTEN STAFF, LAUNCHES PETITION**

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) is calling for the immediate inoculation of kindergarten and crèche staff with a Covid-19 vaccine

that has been approved by the European Medicines Agency (EMA), a party leader said at an online press conference on Saturday. Judit Földi Rácz said “complete vaccination chaos reigns” in Hungary. “Orbán’s people are inoculating football players, while kindergarten and crèche staff are with their kids day after day without any defence,” she added. She noted that DK earlier pressed for teachers to be among the first to be vaccinated against the coronavirus. As no Covid-19 vaccination has been approved for small children, she said, it’s important for people caring for them to be inoculated.

DK also said it is launching a petition demanding that people be allowed to pick the Covid-19 vaccine they prefer without being put at any disadvantage. Gergely Arató, the deputy leader of the opposition party’s parliamentary group, told an online press conference on Sunday that the petition had become necessary after governing Fidesz rejected DK’s bill on the matter in parliament. He said that “we European Hungarians” demand that the government allow people to decide which vaccination they trust.

“Those 133 brave people who let themselves be inoculated with a Chinese vaccine that hasn’t been reviewed and hasn’t been licenced by the European Medicines Agency are welcome to do so if they have so much faith in the vaccine,” he added.

In a response to Arató’s remarks, ruling Fidesz said the “parties of the Gyurcsány list” are “stirring up distrust

in vaccines, even though people are dying because they’re in short supply”. Fidesz dubbed DK’s initiative a “campaign of death”.

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## **SOCIALISTS PRESS FOR FREE RAPID COVID TESTS**

The Socialists are recommending that the government adopt a practice similar to the one in Austria and ensure everybody five Covid-19 rapid home tests a month, free of charge, a lawmaker of the opposition party said on Sunday. Ildikó Borbély Bangó told an online press conference that people can’t “sit with their hands in their laps” until there is enough vaccine to inoculate everybody, but must make use of all available tools to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. “It would appear that [governing] Fidesz has written off one of the most important tools for defence: testing,” she added.

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## **LMP URGES CHANGES TO EDUCATION SYSTEM**

If the future of the country’s youth is important, the government should make a number of changes to the education system, the co-leader of opposition LMP said on Saturday. Máté Kanász-Nagy told an online press conference that the compulsory schooling age should be raised back to 18 from 16, while the quality and selection of teaching materials should be increased. LMP wants to see teaching materials that prepare students for the changing

challenges of a changing world, ones that develop their abilities and skills, he added. He said the number of drop-outs must be reduced, and a system of career counselling should be introduced. He added that the failure to include knowledge of globalisation in matriculation examination requirements was a “serious step backwards”. Kanász-Nagy pressed for universal free tuition for at least the first degree in tertiary education, and said universities should not be farmed out to foundations, but remain under the stewardship of the state, while ensuring their autonomy.

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## **MOMENTUM PICKS LEADER FEKETE-GYŐR TO RUN IN JOINT OPPOSITION PM PRIMARY**

András Fekete-Győr, the leader of the Momentum party, will run in the primary for the joint opposition’s candidate for prime minister, the party said on social media on Sunday. Momentum said the 2022 general elections must “not only be about replacing [Prime Minister] Viktor Orbán”.

“We have an even more important task: to build a new, 21st-century Hungary,” the party added.

“Building a new Hungary requires new faces, ones that don’t come from the world before 2010 and who understand that system-wide change is necessary before Hungary loses a whole generation,” Momentum said.

The party said Fekete-Győr had proved capable of forming a community of those from the left and the right, of conservatives and liberals who believe in a common goal. It added that he would also be able to bridge political camps to bring together everybody who believes in the vision of a new and better Hungary.

**GOVT TO UPGRADE AIRPORT IN NW HUNGARY**

Innovation and Technology Minister László Palkovics outlined plans to transform the Székesfehérvár-Börgönd airport, one of the country’s oldest, into a centre for recreational flight, instruction and research, after a meeting with local leaders on Saturday. Palkovics said the government has earmarked 750 million forints (EUR 2m) for preparations to upgrade the airport in the northwest of the country, making it suitable for small corporate aircraft, recreational aircraft and pilot instruction as well as for drone development. He added that the developments would extend to the neighbouring industrial park. He

said the Székesfehérvár campus of Óbuda University, which is getting 30 billion forints in support for a new technology research centre, would be able to use the airport for aviation research and development. The airport development is being undertaken in the framework of the government’s Modern Cities programme.

**FILM COMMISSIONER: HUNGARIAN FILM, CINEMA FESTIVAL TO MOVE TO VESZPRÉM-BALATON REGION**

The annual festival of Hungarian cinema and filmmakers will be organised at a new venue, the Veszprém-Balaton region, this summer, in partnership with the European Capital of Culture programme Veszprem will host in 2023, Csaba Káel, government commissioner for developing Hungary’s motion picture industry, said in an interview with news portal origo.hu on Saturday. Káel said the Magyar Mozgóképek Szemle would take place in Veszprém, Balatonfüred and

Balatonalmádi in June, “the pandemic situation hopefully allowing”, supporting the creation of Hungary’s “new creative region”.

“Veszprém earlier hosted a legendary TV festival, and we’ll continue that tradition with open-air screenings, conventions and exciting film programmes,” he added.

Commenting on Hungary’s filmmaking industry, Káel said foreign productions had pulled out of the country in the spring amid alarm over the pandemic, but domestic productions soon restarted, and a good number of foreign productions came back in summer, too, after the situation improved and thanks to government measures. Ties with Hollywood are “active”, he said, adding that Hungary plans to have a high-profile presence at the American Film Market in the autumn. He said work had started on eight new international co-productions last year.

Noting the importance of film distribution, he said the government had supported local cinemas with 300 million forints (EUR 836,000) in emergency funding.

