

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Tibor Illés

Human Resources Minister Miklós Kásler visiting an SMA patient

UPCOMING EVENTS

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: BOOSTER JABS AVAILABLE FROM AUG 1

The government is making a third round of vaccines available from August 1 -- to be administered four months after the second -- and vaccination will be made mandatory for health-care workers, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told public broadcaster Kossuth Rádió, citing the spread of the Delta variant.

Due to the Delta variant, people who are not vaccinated yet are in greater danger than ever before, Orbán warned. Elderly citizens who have so far not accepted the vaccine will receive personal visits to convince them to accept the jab, he said. Also, children over the age of 12 will have the opportunity to receive the coronavirus vaccine on the two days preceding the start of the academic year, Orbán said. Some 13-14% of 12-15-year-olds have already received the vaccine, he added, with a vaccination rate among 16-18-year-olds of around 45%. The prime minister said Hungary remains one of the safest countries in Europe in terms of herd immunity, with the number of fully inoculated citizens exceeding that in Germany or the United Kingdom. Orbán advised Hungarians to travel abroad only if they are fully inoculated.

"During a crisis, all opinions expressed that create uncertainty are problematic, and everything that weakens joint action supporting the community is harmful," Orbán said. That is especially true during a pandemic when human lives are at stake, he said.

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PM ORBÁN COMMENTS ON CHILD PROTECTION LAW, ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in his weekly public radio interview that sex education was a matter for parents and this, he added, was “confirmed by European documents”. Children can participate in sex education with the agreement of the parent, but no one except the teacher and people approved by the principal can do so, he noted. “We feel they want to take our children away from us,” Orbán said. Orbán noted that he had not been invited to the debate in the European Parliament as was his wont when the situation was “crucial”. He said the issue wasn’t just a Hungarian one, referring to a similar situation in Italy, Romania and Lithuania. If Lithuania has managed to protect its interests, then Hungary will succeed, too, he said. Noting UEFA’s sanctions against Hungarian football, Orbán said “double standards” had become prevalent in Europe. He said linking EU funds to a legal dispute was “unacceptable” because EU monies were not donations but something Hungarians had worked hard for and had a right to.

Hungary’s recovery programmes, he said, would be launched from the budget even if EU money is unavailable. The language and framework of the debate may appear a legal matter, but the actual matter itself was political, he said, adding that children were “held sacred” in Hungary. “We can’t let sexual propagandists into our schools.” Orbán

accused Brussels of abusing its power and “forcing on us what we don’t want”. “Our children and their upbringing is all about their freedom,” he said. Orbán called the European Commission’s standpoint on the matter “shameful” and he accused it of “legal hooliganism”. Both family law and education, he added, were national competences, and Brussels had nothing to do with them. He appealed to Hungarians who “consider the government’s ability to protect the interests of parents as essential” to fill in the National Consultation survey.

ORBÁN OFFERS CONDOLENCES AND AID TO GERMANY FLOOD VICTIMS

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has sent a letter to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, expressing Hungary’s condolences to the families of victims of the floods that have ravaged western Germany in the past few days. Orbán said he was “distressed” to learn of the disaster, which has killed at least 80 people in North Rhine-Westphalia. Hungary is ready to help in damage control in the region with “all means at its disposal”, he said.

GOVT OFFICIAL ATTENDS INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM SUMMIT

Tristan Azbej, the state secretary responsible for aid to persecuted Christians and the Hungary Helps

programme, addressed the International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington, DC. At the panel Governments and Frameworks that Advance Religious Freedom, Azbej said the persecution of Christians was “one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world”, affecting 340 million people worldwide. At the same time, international forums mostly “ignore it completely”, Azbej said. The Hungary Helps programme has supported 250,000 people worldwide in the past four years, enabling them to remain in their homelands or return after having emigrated, he said. On the sidelines of the conference, Azbej met representatives of USAID and the US State Department to discuss the expansion of a bilateral cooperation agreement between USAID and Hungary Helps, designed to aid persecuted Christians and Yazidis in Iraq. They also looked into expanding the programme to help Christians, women and girls in African crisis zones, Azbej said. Azbej also gave an interview to conservative news channel Newsmax, and talked about Hungary’s child protection law and the “international fake news campaign” in its wake.

HUNGARY RECORDS TWO CORONAVIRUS FATALITIES, 64 NEW INFECTIONS

Two Covid-19 patients died in the past 24 hours, while 64 new infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Friday. So far 5,559,178 people have

received a first jab, while 5,268,814 have been fully vaccinated. The number of active infections has declined to 36,078, while hospitals are treating 86 Covid patients, 10 of whom need respiratory assistance. There are 1,473 people in official quarantine, while 6,238,275 tests have been officially carried out. Since the first outbreak, 808,725 infections have been registered, while fatalities have risen to 30,015. Fully 742,642 people have made a recovery. So far, most infections have been registered in Budapest and Pest County, followed by the counties of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Győr-Moson-Sopron and Hajdú-Bihar.

PÁRBSZÉD CALLS ON GOVT TO APOLOGISE OVER SINOPHARM

The opposition Párbeszéd party has called on the government to apologise for the “unprofessional way” it introduced the Sinopharm vaccine and for “misleading people”.

In his radio interview on Friday, the prime minister tacitly admitted that opposition demands to make a third booster jab available had been warranted, the party’s deputy group leader, Sándor Burány, told an online press briefing. He said the minister of foreign affairs and trade had been responsible for giving Sinopharm vaccine the go-ahead in Hungary for “political reasons”, and the European Medicines Agency had not approved the jab at the time.

Hungary’s medicines authority gave emergency approval to Sinopharm.

Burány said people over the age of 65 in Hungary had come “under pressure” to accept the Sinopharm jab, whereas it was deemed inappropriate for over-60s in other countries. Tests carried out independently of the government do not paint a reassuring picture, he said, adding that Sinopharm’s efficacy in people over the age of sixty was “much weaker” than that of any other vaccine.

In a separate press conference, Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony called for a vaccination campaign targeting citizens over 60 who have received the Sinopharm vaccine. Karácsony urged “swifter, more active and more proactive” measures to administer booster jabs to elderly recipients, and called on the government to pledge not to give Sinopharm vaccines to people over 60.

ITM: THREE DECADES OF UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS OF DOMESTIC EMPLOYMENT

Hungary’s Q1 employment data is the best since the 1989-1990 change in political system, a ministry of innovation and technology official said on Friday. State secretary for employment policy Sándor Bodó noted in a statement that Eurostat recorded a 77.7% employment rate in Hungary, putting Hungary in sixth place in the European Union, almost six percentage points above the EU average and close to full employment. Only the Netherlands, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Estonia

and Germany have more people in employment in the 20-64 age group, the statement said. The jobless rate of 3.9% is also among the lowest in Europe, it added. Bodó attributed the favourable performance to the government’s effective management of the pandemic and its successful economic protection measures, as well as sustained policies to build a work-based society. He noted that in 2010 Hungary had been an EU laggard in terms of employment in the 20-64 age, when less than 60% had a job. In the meantime, the indicator has grown by 18.3 percentage points, the statement said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: BOSCH AUTOMOTIVE STEERING EXPANDS IN HUNGARY PLANT

Bosch Automotive Steering Bosch is expanding its plant in Maklár, in northern Hungary, with three investments totalling 52.5 billion forints (EUR 146m) that will create 180 jobs, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said on Friday. The government is supporting the investment with 12.250 billion forints, Péter Szijjártó told a press briefing. The investments cover all Bosch’s activities, from research and development to production, including a new generation of electric steering necessary for autonomous cars, the minister noted. It also gives a boost to the Hungarian automotive industry’s transition to a new era, Szijjártó added.

MINISTRY: CANADA AGREES TO IMPORT HUNGARIAN RABBIT MEAT

Canada has agreed to import Hungarian rabbit meat and meat products after the conclusion of talks that lasted several years, the Ministry of Agriculture (AM) said on Friday, adding that the agreement presented a boon for domestic producers. The new deal and its recognition of Hungary's animal health certification is likely to lead to further exports to Canada, the ministry said in a statement, qualifying its "outstanding" economic importance.

MINISTER LAUNCHES INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT ON CROATIA BORDER

László Palkovics, Hungary's minister of innovation and technology, on Friday addressed an event launching a series

of infrastructure projects to construct a bridge between Kotoriba in Croatia and Murakeresztúr in Hungary over the river Mur, as well as the roads leading to it. Palkovics noted that the construction of the final stretch of Hungary's M6 highway started in February. When that project is finished in early 2024, Hungary will have two highway connections to Croatia and will have completed the Hungarian stretch of a north-south corridor between the Baltic and Adriatic Seas, he said. While motorways play a role in international transit and long-term economic goals, small-scale transport development between the border regions will boost the connections there, he said.

HUNGARY REVAMPS SCHOOL FINAL EXAMS

The government has revamped the national core curriculum and school final exam requirements. In the 2023/2024 academic year,

exams taking place in May-June will include new subjects -- such as digital culture and civic studies -- as well as a renewed focus in others, while testing students on their independent and creative problem-solving abilities, the Ministry of Human Resources (Emmi) said in a statement on Friday. Project work in all science subjects will also be incorporated into the exam structure. The current compulsory exam subjects will remain the same, however. Freedom will be given to schools to set aside lessons for exam preparation in grades 11 and 12, the ministry said. The new requirements have been drawn up with the input of practicing teachers and experts who have broad experience in setting examinations, and the preliminary draft was put to a wide-ranging professional and social consultation before the final document was adopted, the statement said.