

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Government officials hold press conference on illegal migration

MTI/NoémiBruzák

UPCOMING EVENTS

Coronavirus updates

Hungarian Olympic Committee holds congress

TOP STORY

GOVT TO PROLONG NATL VACCINATION CAMPAIGN

The government is prolonging the national vaccination campaign by a week, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said on public radio on Friday.

“We can have a big family Christmas this year” only if the number of those taking booster shots grows significantly, Orbán told Kossuth Radio. Most of those being vaccinated are receiving the third jab now, with the number of those still taking the first dose the lowest, he said. Orbán said that while lockdowns only slowed the spread of the disease, booster shots offered a decisive solution. At the same time, people should also comply with the protection measures in place, he said. He asked Hungarians to take the third jab. On the subject of possible further restrictions, Orbán said the government would not exclude anything. If take-up of booster shots rose and the pace of new infections could be reined in or halted, shutdowns would be unnecessary, he added. Following European approval for a vaccine that can be used to inoculate 5-12 year-olds, Hungary has purchased 2 million doses, he said, adding that the first shipment of 130,000 doses was expected to arrive on Dec. 20. After that, deliveries of the vaccine suitable for children would be continuous.

ORBÁN: HEALTH-CARE SECTOR CAN WITHSTAND PRESSURE OF PANDEMIC

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, in an interview with public broadcaster Kossuth Radio on Friday, said administration and health-care staff, as well as people helping police officers and soldiers, were a guarantee of Hungary's health-care system not collapsing. All the necessary equipment, beds, ventilators are available, as well as the designated Covid hospital, which could be operational "in an instant". Calling the work of doctors and nurses "superhuman" and "heroic", Orbán noted the government's decision to boost wages in the sector. The wage hikes signalled to health-care staff that "the country stands by them", he added.

Meanwhile, Orbán said migration was expected to ramp up significantly at Hungary's southern border over the next few months. So far this year, more than 100,000 migrants have been stopped at Hungary's border, three times last year's figure. At the same time, the Italian-Spanish, Eastern and Balkan routes were all seeing a massive increase in migration, he said, noting that 30,000-35,000 people were leaving Afghanistan each day, most likely in Hungary's direction, intending to traverse the country. He said the European Union's rules on migration had been written in peacetime and were now obsolete. "Today there's

no peacetime," he added. The new Berlin government sees Germany "as an immigrant country", while Hungary is not in favour of turning into one, he said, adding that the two standpoints were "incompatible", and neither side would abandon its position.

He noted that Hungary deports illegal migrants across the border, and applications for asylum are processed either at the Hungarian embassy of their country of origin or the last country they have passed through. He also noted that the EU rejected this solution and insisted Hungary should "accept these people" and process asylum claims in the country. Brussels, Orbán added, should cover its share of the costs of defending Europe's external border rather than punishing countries on the frontline doing so. Instead, the EU funded the "pro-migration organisations" of George Soros, he said.

ORBÁN: GOVT COMMITTED TO DEFENDING UTILITY BILL CAPS

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, in an interview with public broadcaster Kossuth Radio on Friday, underlined the government's commitment to "defending the results" of the scheme to cap utility bills. Put to him that the government scheme was anti-market, he said: "I'm not interested in the market; I'm interested in the Hungarian people." Orbán said the left wing believed in an "oracle" that conjured an image of the market. "We, on the other

hand, must base our logic on being free and able to regulate ourselves." He said the scheme which has run for the past eight years had proven its worth and it must be defended "by attacking the left wing and Brussels". The prime minister said tax increases would inevitably follow an election win by the left. The Fidesz government, however, pursued tax cuts as a way to create jobs, he added.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: FOREIGN INVESTMENTS OF HUNGARIAN COMPANIES KEY FOR BALANCED ECONOMY

The government is supporting foreign investments by Hungarian companies with the aim to balancing out the profits syphoned from the Hungarian economy by foreign investors in the country, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said on Friday, at a factory visit in Obninsk, near Moscow. At a visit to the local unit of Hungarian medical industry company Sanatmetál, Szijjártó noted Hungarian Eximbank's loans and the foreign ministry's funding supported those investments. "The Hungarian economy is entering a new phase with new aims and tasks. Investments abroad enable Hungarian companies to get a foothold in foreign markets," he said.

Hungary's economy has become much stronger in the past decade, Szijjártó said. "Ten years ago, we were back of the class in the European

Union. Now Hungary is one of the fastest developing countries in Europe," he said. The country has "scored one investment record after the other" in recent years, even in the last year during the coronavirus pandemic, he said. Russia is one of the main targets of foreign investment of Hungarian companies, he said. Hungary and Russia pursue "pragmatic cooperation based on mutual respect," he said. Sanatmetal is currently implementing a 1.3 billion forint (EUR 3.5m) investment in the three-year-old facility to manufacture parts for prosthetic knees. The products manufactured in Russia will open inroads into the Russian and Eurasian markets, he noted. Russian Health Minister Mikhail Murashko also attended the event.

MINISTRY: HUNGARY HELPS PROGRAMME HELPED 500,000

The Hungarian government's Hungary Helps programme has helped 500,000 people to remain in or returning to their homelands in the four years since it was founded, the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement on Friday. Since 2017, Hungary Helps has launched over 170 projects in 50 countries, providing humanitarian aid, supporting reconstruction works and helping to preserve Christian communities in crisis regions, the ministry said. Tristan Azbej, the state secretary responsible for aiding persecuted Christians and for the

Hungary Helps scheme, attended the inauguration ceremony of a training facility in a shanty town in Nairobi, Kenya. The facility was built with Hungarian funding and will contribute to the training of 500 young people "living in hopeless circumstances", the statement said.

GOVT OFFICIAL: CARPATHIAN BASIN DEVELOPING INTO UNITED ECONOMIC SPACE

Thanks to the Hungarian government's efforts to strengthen and connect entrepreneurs in the region, the Carpathian Basin is developing into a united economic space, a state secretary of the Prime Minister's Office told the daily Magyar Nemzet. Árpád János Potápi said in an interview published on Friday that by 2015 the government's policy for Hungarians beyond the borders focused on economic support for Hungarian entrepreneurs with the aim of helping them to make a living in their homelands. Since then, "we have organised thematic years to support young Hungarian entrepreneurs and family businesses beyond the borders, launched tenders for SMEs and an economic development programme for the Carpathian Basin," Potápi said. As a next step, the Hungarian government is supporting a mentor programme to help young companies build up their networks and to get to know the legal and economic environment of their trade, Potápi said.

The programme was launched late in 2019. So far, 330 young companies and 170 mentor companies have availed themselves of the scheme, he said.

HUNGARY RECORDS 11,871 NEW CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS, 162 DEATHS

Altogether 162 patients died of a Covid-related illness during the past 24 hours, while 11,871 new coronavirus infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Friday. So far 6,087,474 people have received a first jab, while 5,823,818 have been fully vaccinated. Altogether 2,269,551 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections stands at 172,488, while hospitals are treating 6,913 Covid-19 patients, 695 of whom need respiratory assistance. Since the first outbreak, 1,068,888 infections have been registered, while the number of fatalities has risen to 33,866. Fully 862,534 people have made a recovery.

MATHIAS CORVINUS COLLEGIUM CO-HOSTS ROME CONFERENCE ON EU JUDICIARY

Hungary's Mathias Corvinus Collegium and the Centro Studi Machiavelli held a conference on the European Union law's relationship to member states' basic laws late on Thursday. The event was held in the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of the Italian parliament, with lawmakers of the League party, and MEP

Nicola Procaccini of Fratelli d'Italia attending. Francesco Giubilei, a leader of the conservative Nazione Futura movement, said the event was a contribution to "rethinking" the workings of the European Union. "Polish, Hungarian and Italian speakers agreed that the common judiciary of the bloc, as declared in the EU, in reality means politically motivated actions from Brussels executed by commissioners, as happened in the case of Poland and Hungary," he said.

HUNGARY INVESTMENT VOLUME UP 12.4% YR/YR IN Q3

Hungary's investment volume grew by an annual 12.4% in the third quarter, up from a low base, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Friday. In the base period, investment volume contracted by 11%. The fresh data show construction investments increased by 14.1% and investments in machinery and equipment were up by 10.3%. Corporate investments jumped by 21.8% to 1,756 billion forints (EUR 4.8bn), while public sector investments declined by 11.7%

to 402 billion. In a quarter-on-quarter comparison, investment volume rose by a seasonally-adjusted 1.8%. In absolute terms, Q3 investments came to 3,065 billion forints. Construction investments accounted for about 60% of the total. Manufacturing sector investments climbed 24.9%, construction sector investments rose by 3.0% and investments in the commercial accommodations and catering sector jumped 53.0%.

Commenting on the data, Finance Minister Mihály Varga said the Hungarian economy benefitted from 7,800 billion forints' worth of investments over the first nine months of the year. Investments were mainly driven by the construction and manufacturing sectors, the shipping industry, storage, trade and agriculture, Varga said on Facebook. Hungary's investment rate has risen above 27% of GDP from 20% since 2010, the minister said, adding that this was among the highest rates in the European Union. Hungary is also "a leader" in terms of economic growth within the EU, "and we're working to maintain this advantage," Varga said.

Analysts told MTI that the Q3 investment figures exceeded pre-pandemic levels and were expected to receive a further boost from the payout of EU funds. Takarékbank chief analyst Gergely Suppan said investments supported by both the state budget and EU funds were expected to increase, while the Next Generation EU recovery fund would provide additional resources. To offset the delay in the payout of EU recovery monies, the government has decided to pre-finance the projects that they are meant to cover, he noted. Suppan put full-year investment growth at above 7%. Dániel Molnár of economic research institute Századvég said the fact that investment growth in Q3 was mainly driven by the private sector showed that businesses had recovered from the crisis caused by the pandemic and had restarted their previously abandoned developments, in addition to investing in new ones. He projected investment growth to remain robust in the long term, adding, at the same time, that it was heavily dependent on the performance of the economy and that a slowdown in the recovery could hold back investments.