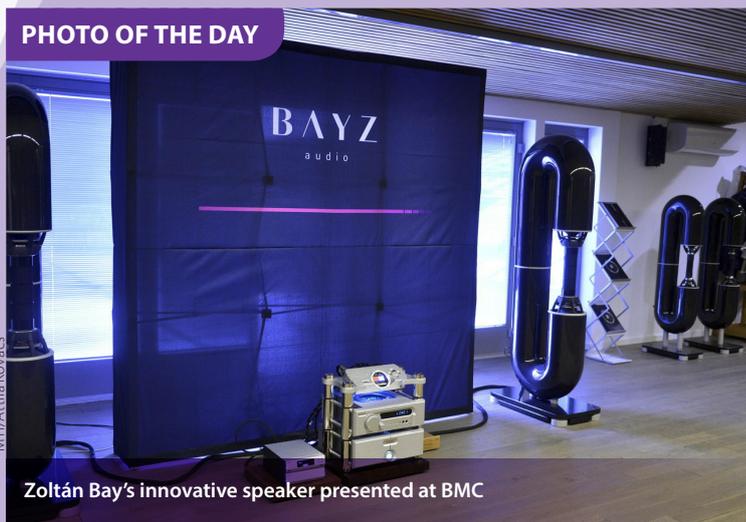


## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Attila Kovács

Zoltán Bay's innovative speaker presented at BMC

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Stats office releases Oct retail figures**

**NBH presser on Stability Report**

**Events at the Planet  
Budapest 2021 Expo**

**Coronavirus updates**

## TOP STORY

# VACCINATION DRIVE EXTENDED

The government has decided to extend the national vaccination drive now under way by a further week, the prime minister's chief of staff announced.

Gergely Gulyás told a regular government press conference that the government was also mulling making the validity of immunity certificates conditional on the inclusion of a booster jab. Also, vaccines for 5-11-year-olds are slated to arrive in Hungary on Dec. 13, a week earlier than planned, and 2 million doses have been ordered, he said, welcoming Hungary's increasing vaccination rate, saying the country was in first place in the European Union in terms of the proportion of booster jabs administered, with 2.6 million Hungarians having received their third shot. Referring to press criticism of Hungary's vaccine purchases, Gulyás said the government had not changed its vaccination policy. "The government estimated vaccine need correctly but it will make further purchases so shots are available for age groups that could not be vaccinated before." Gulyás said Hungary had all vaccine types available except for the Russian Sputnik V, adding that there was "an abundance" of vaccines on the international market and possible further purchases would not be difficult to make.

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## **JUSTICE MINISTER: COURT ADVISER GAVE OPINION, NOT VERDICT**

The opinion of the Advocate General of the Court of Justice of the European Union that the court should dismiss the action brought by Hungary and Poland against the so-called rule-of-law conditionality regulation is “not the verdict, just an opinion”, Justice Minister Judit Varga said.

Campos Sanchez-Bordona, the Advocate-General, on Thursday issued an opinion that Hungary and Poland’s suit against the European Union decision to tie EU funding to rule-of-law conditions “should be dismissed”. The conditionality decision is in line with EU law and the principle of legal certainty, Sanchez-Bordona said in the opinion which precedes a court decision.

Hungary and Poland turned to the ECJ last March with the complaint that the European Parliament’s decree, which was endorsed by the European Council, lacked a legal basis.

In his opinion, Sanchez-Bordona said the decree aimed to protect EU values by implementing a financial conditionality facility rather than implementing sanction mechanisms similar to Article 7 of the Treaty of the European Union. The decree requires a “close connection” between violations of the rule of law and the execution of budgetary measures, and so it will be implemented only when the infringement on the rule

of law is directly linked with the implementation of the EU budget, he said. The Advocate General’s opinion has no binding effect on the ECJ.

Varga said on Facebook in an English-language post that the opinion of Campos Sánchez-Bordona “ignores the fact that the conditionality regulation suffers from a manifest error in law, which alone would justify the annulment”. “Furthermore, its legal basis remains erroneous while it circumvents the Treaties and infringes basic rule of law requirements, in particular the principles of legal certainty and legislative clarity,” she added.

Varga said “before tears of joy well up in the eyes of the Brussels elite and the left-liberal media, let me just remind everyone: this is only a proposal. The judgement is not expected until the end of the year, early next year”.

“The Hungarian Government maintains its position and hopes that the Court will base its judgment solely on legal arguments and common sense, it won’t follow the erroneous arguments of the Advocate General, and will instead annul the regulation or call on the EU legislator to amend it,” she said. “We say no to blackmailing with the rule of law!”

The lawmakers representing ruling Fidesz in the European Parliament said they would continue to make every effort to resist “blackmail” masked as “rule of law”. The “so-called conditionality regulation” is obviously aimed at depriving member states of EU funds if they fail to meet the EU’s expectation, the group said in a statement.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: 2021 ‘BEST YEAR IN HUNGARY-RUSSIA RELATIONS’**

Due to vaccine purchases and the long-term gas supply agreement, “it is not an exaggeration to say that 2021 was the most successful year” in Hungarian-Russian relations, Péter Szijjártó, Hungary’s minister of foreign affairs and trade, wrote on Facebook after meeting his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in Stockholm on Thursday. Szijjártó said he and his Russian counterpart reviewed the main areas of bilateral cooperation and agreed on a five-point plan of action for next year. Priority goals include starting the construction of the new blocks of the Paks nuclear power plant, launching the production of Sputnik vaccines in Hungary, increasing the number of freight trains entering Hungary at Záhony and operated by a joint venture to be established on December 16, finalising joint space research projects, and boosting Hungarian agriculture sales to Russia, Szijjártó said.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: EAST-WEST COOPERATION NEEDED IN AREAS OF HEALTH, SECURITY**

Close cooperation between East and West could enhance the success of the international community’s actions in the areas

of health and security, Foreign Minister Peter Szijjártó said in Stockholm. The ministry said Szijjártó told a ministerial meeting of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) that there were significant global challenges in the areas of health and security. The new variants of coronavirus posed considerably more serious health threats than previous variants, he said. Additionally, migration waves are intensifying, partly as a result of the failure of the Afghanistan mission and partly due to other conflicts, he added. "The spread of the pandemic and migratory trends can only be stopped if we can build strong-East-West cooperation," he said.

Commenting on new virus variants, Szijjártó said there was a global race for time. At the same time, there are successful, high-quality scientific-medical communities in the East as well as the West that could be even more effective in the fight against the pandemic if they were working together, he said. "More people could be saved if political and ideological considerations were removed from the horizon," he said. The same applies to migration, especially in the current situation when developments in Afghanistan have created a real danger of further mass migration waves towards Europe, he added. It would be important to develop cooperation with central Asian countries to protect their borders and halt migration from Afghanistan, he said.

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### **SZIJJÁRTÓ CALLS FOR SUPPORT FOR COUNTRIES TO STOP MIGRATION, PROTECT BORDERS**

Hungary stands by its stance that migration should be stopped and supports Poland and the Baltic states in their efforts to protect their borders, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Stockholm after talks with his Belarusian counterpart, Vladimir Makei. After the talks on the sidelines of a meeting of foreign ministers of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Szijjártó said in a Facebook post that the European Union was in a difficult situation, with migration pressure building up on three borders simultaneously. "It is unacceptable to place migration pressure on another country or use migrants as pawns in hybrid warfare. At the same time, we have to maintain channels of communication or we lose all possibility of finding a solution," Szijjártó said.

The minister noted that Hungary had experienced the challenges of mass illegal migration during the 2015 crisis. "We then made a definitive decision to stop the inflow of migrants into Hungary. The fence has been working well ever since, and we stopped 110,000 migrants on our southern borders this year alone," he said. The security risks arising from the allied forces' withdrawal from Afghanistan are threatening with larger migration

waves than ever, he said. "It is in our interest to strengthen our borders and to push our defence lines as far back as possible," he said.

Szijjártó slammed the "astounding hypocrisy of Brussels and certain countries ... who keep talking against migration even as they keep mandatory distribution quotas on the agenda, support pro-migration NGOs and criticise us, the fence and the transit zone," he said.

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### **GULYÁS: UTILITY-FEE CAP EXTENDED**

The prime minister's chief of staff said the scheme to cap public utility fees would be rolled out to small companies and municipalities. Gergely Gulyás said this was "one of the most important tools" the government had to fight inflation. Gulyás said global energy prices were now "unrestrained", and he warned that the price of electricity, which had "perhaps grown highest on the world market", must not be applied to retail price calculations. He reiterated that scheme would also apply to Hungarian small businesses with up to an annual 4 billion forints (EUR 11m) net turnover or balance sheet total that employed fewer than ten people. Local governments will also get the same access because "there appears to be significant demand for this among local councils", he said.

Gulyás also said it was important that the operations of local governments should go undisturbed and the

situation resulting from the pandemic and the global market should pose the least extra burden on them. He said the National Bank of Hungary was making every effort to fight inflation, and the government was contributing to the fight by maintaining and expanding reduced public utility fees and fuel prices. It is hoped that Hungarian inflation figures will fall by the end of next year and “we can return to the ordinary path”, he added.

Asked about vaccine mandates, Gulyás said decisions on making Covid jabs mandatory had to remain a national competency. Hungary has introduced strict vaccine mandates in workplaces where workers interact with many people, the health-care sector, public administration and schools, he noted. Employers can also mandate their employees to get vaccinated, he added.

More than 100,000 people got jabbed each day last week during the national vaccination campaign, Gulyás said. And though only half as many people are getting a shot this week, the daily vaccination rate is still significantly higher than in the weeks before the campaign, he added.

Because many people got their second dose over six months ago, a booster shot would be timely for them, since they are now less protected against the virus, Gulyás said. Whether there will be another wave of the pandemic and how severe it will be depends on the number of people who get the booster jab, he said. Hungary has more than 2.8

million doses of the Pfizer vaccine in stock in addition to 778,000 doses of Moderna, 3.1 million doses of the Janssen jab, and more than 2 million doses of Sinopharm, he said. Also there are more than 1.6 million doses of AstraZeneca which will soon reach their expiration date, so the government will donate them to other countries, he added.

Gulyás said current epidemic rules differed from previous ones since now everyone had a free choice on whether to get vaccinated or not, and the government did not plan to introduce restrictions like those in Austria and Slovakia. The consensus is that the fourth wave of the epidemic was now peaking and the descent would start at around Christmas, he added. Regarding compulsory vaccinations, he said 92% of teachers in public schools have been jabbed, and the Dec. 15 deadline for a first shot still applied. Gulyás said that those who got the Sputnik jab would have to wait for the European Medicines Agency (EMA) to approve the vaccine in order to travel freely within Europe, and Hungarian diplomacy was doing everything possible to get the EU to change its standpoint on the Russian vaccine.

He also broached the subject of a possible fourth shot, saying enough supplies would be at hand should the medical establishment advise getting one.

Regarding the change in how ventilator data is reported, he said the new data reflected the distinction between intubation, which qualifies as

a life-saving intervention, and other forms of assisted respiration. He added there was no reason not to disclose data on non-invasive ventilated patients.

He said the operative board responsible for handling the pandemic could soon decide on changes to the validity of Covid immunity cards. However, the government will not have to issue new cards even if they were to be made invalid six months after the receipt of the second vaccine dose, as they contain information on the number of jabs the card-holder has received, he said.

Meanwhile, Gulyás said he preferred not to comment on information provided by the mayor of Budapest, Gergely Karácsony, that Fudan University had abandoned its plan to build a campus in Budapest, adding that the government’s position on the Fudan project was clear. The question of when the land would be transferred was, for example, “a technical question”, he added.

**ÁDER: EXPO SEEKING ‘SOLUTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF YOUNGER GENERATIONS’**

The Planet Budapest 2021 sustainability expo is aiming to ensure that the quality of life of younger generations will be “at least on par” with today’s standards, President János Áder told public radio. The event running through Sunday at the Budapest expo grounds features several inventions

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of young people contributing to a sustainable future, Áder told Petőfi Radio. He cited a composting robot and a water-economic car wash system as examples. Áder warned of the ever growing “throw-away society”, and called on listeners to rethink their consumption habits. According to a UN survey, one-third of clothes purchased is not worn more than once, he said.

### **V4-S KOREA RESEARCH COOPERATION SIGNED IN BUDAPEST**

Minister of Innovation and Technology László Palkovics, South Korea’s deputy minister at the science and ICT ministry Lee Tai-hee and ambassadors of the Visegrad Group countries signed in Budapest an agreement on cooperation in research and development, the ministry said. During a South Korean presidential visit in Budapest in early November, the sides announced that the V4 and Korea were planning to improve knowledge-based links, the ministry added. Under the agreement signed by the ministries, a V4-Korea programme for basic research will be launched. Hungary plans to invite new applications for support to bilateral research and development projects with South Korea.

Korean investments further strengthen Hungary’s role in vehicle production, the ministry said.

Hungary has the second largest battery production capacity in Europe thanks to the presence of Korean companies that are market leaders

in electric car manufacturing. The trust demonstrated by South Korean companies in Hungary is expected to result in the creation of further jobs in such sectors as digitalisation, the health and defence industries, the ministry added.

### **KARÁCSONY: ALL MUNI COUNCIL PROPERTY SALE DOCUMENTS SINCE 2019 SENT TO CTTEE PROBING ‘CITY HALL CASE’**

The Budapest capital asset management centre has sent the entire documentation of all municipal council property sales since 2019 to the special committee investigating alleged plans to sell City Hall, Gergely Karácsony, the city’s mayor, announced. The documents contain the valuations concerning the property sales, the calls for tenders, the bids themselves, demolition reports, the proposals on the decisions, the property sales contracts, the pre-emption statements and the property transfer reports, Karácsony said on Facebook. Budapest’s municipal assembly last Wednesday voted to set up an investigative committee to look into alleged plans by the city’s leadership to sell the capital’s City Hall. The motion to set up the committee put forward by Zsolt Láng, the group leader of ruling Fidesz’s Budapest chapter, was approved with an amendment proposal submitted by Karácsony. The committee will be tasked with investigating audio

recordings in connection with alleged plans to sell the City Hall building and other properties owned by the municipality, as well as the circumstances under which they were leaked. The seven-strong committee, headed by Péter Kovács, the Fidesz mayor of the 16th district, is set to present its report to the assembly at its December meeting.

### **KÖVÉR: NORWAY’S ‘GAY SANTA’ AD ‘DESECRATES A BELOVED HOLIDAY’**

Speaker of Parliament László Kövér has slammed a Norwegian TV commercial featuring a gay Santa Claus for “desecrating one of our children’s favourite holidays”. The four-minute spot titled “When Harry met Santa” was produced by the Norwegian postal service to mark 50 years since the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Norway. It shows Santa delivering gifts to the clip’s other titular character, Harry, over several years. Harry is then seen writing a letter to Santa that reads “All I want for Christmas is you.” The clip ends with Harry and Santa embracing and kissing. “There’s a limit to everything except vileness and absurdity,” Kövér said when asked to comment on the advert in a video interview to hirado.hu. The speaker said what made the ad worse was that it was produced by a state institution and not US financier “George Soros’s NGOs”, adding that commercials like these were “a sly abuse of Christian patience”.

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## **HUNGARY RECORDS 10,466 NEW CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS, 218 DEATHS**

Altogether 218 patients died of a Covid-related illness over the past 24 hours, while 10,466 new coronavirus infections were registered, [koronavirus.gov.hu](http://koronavirus.gov.hu) said on Thursday. So far 6,138,885 people have received a first jab, while 5,852,417 have been fully vaccinated. Altogether 2,609,385 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections stands at 187,795, while hospitals are treating 7,450 Covid-19 patients, 550 of whom need respiratory assistance. Since the first outbreak, 1,124,726 infections have been registered, while the number of fatalities has risen to 34,931. Fully 902,000 people have made a recovery. There are 59,593 people in official quarantine, while the number of tests taken stands at 8,516,699.

The vaccination rate among Hungarians older than 12, the age group currently eligible for the coronavirus vaccine, is 69.7%, the [koronavirus.gov.hu](http://koronavirus.gov.hu) said. The

vaccination rate is highest in Pest (75.4%) and Fejér (72.4%) counties and Budapest (71.1%) in central Hungary, the website said. The counties at the bottom of the list are Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok (61.5%), Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (63.4%) and Hajdú-Bihar (63.9%) in the east and northeast of the country, it said. The vaccination campaign has significantly contributed to the rising numbers, the website said.

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## **BIRD FLU DETECTED AT FARM IN SE HUNGARY**

Avian influenza has been detected at a farm in south-eastern Hungary, food safety authority Nébih said on its website. The virus subtype H5N1 was detected at a turkey farm in Békés County. The stock of around 5,000 birds are being destroyed and restrictions have been introduced. Nébih detected bird flu at several other farms in other counties in November.

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## **EXPORTS STAGNATE IN SEPTEMBER - KSH**

Hungary's exports were flat in September compared with the same

period a year earlier, as industry was impacted by supply chain interruptions, a second reading of data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) on Thursday shows. Exports reached 10.370 billion euros, level with their value in September 2020. Imports rose by 14.3% to 10.498 billion euros, giving Hungary a 128 million trade deficit. Hungary, an export-driven economy where trade surpluses are the norm, had a trade deficit for the third month in a row in September.

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## **KARIKÓ TO RECEIVE FRANKLIN MEDAL**

Katalin Karikó and co-researcher Drew Weissman will be among scientists recognised with next year's Benjamin Franklin Medals for their achievement in life sciences, the Philadelphia-based Franklin Institute announced on its website. The two scientists will receive the award "for fundamental research enabling the use of mRNA as a safe, effective, and life-saving vaccine platform for the prevention of infectious disease, including COVID-19", the website said. The award ceremony is planned for May 5 next year.