

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Péter Komka

Snow on Kékestető, Hungary's highest peak

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Coronavirus updates

## TOP STORY

# VACCINATION DAY TO BE HELD IN ALL LOCALITIES

A vaccination day will be held in all Hungarian localities within the next six weeks, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told public radio on Friday.

In the interview, Orbán predicted that the number of people opting for a booster jab against Covid-19 would “skyrocket”. Some one million vaccines were administered by Thursday evening in the first two weeks of the campaign, he said. Around 800,000 were booster jabs, and 115,000 went to people who “for whatever reason” had not accepted the vaccine before, he said. Hungarians are much safer thanks to the vaccine, he said. So far, 2.6 million people, or 27% of the population, have received a booster jab, compared with a European Union average of 10%, he said. Given that the effectiveness of vaccinations declines after six months, the government will contact citizens in person, by email, text message or by post to ask them to get a booster. Orbán praised doctors, nurses, police and soldiers, saying they had withstood the challenges. Commenting on the omicron variant, Orbán said the scientific community was as yet unclear as to its dangers or speed of transmission, but initial reactions of fear were likely to turn out to be greater than dangers posed by omicron. Still, he urged caution.

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## **ORBÁN: REFERENDUM ON CHILD PROTECTION TO STRENGTHEN HUNGARY'S POSITION AGAINST BRUSSELS**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, in an interview with public broadcaster Kossuth Radio on Friday, said Hungary would use the referendum on its amendment to the child protection law to strengthen its position against Brussels, adding that this strategy had worked "when Brussels almost got the better of us on the issue of migration". Thanks to the referendum on migration issues in 2016, "mandatory resettlement quotas were not introduced, and no migrants have been settled in Hungary since," Orbán said. "I don't care what Brussels says about our child protection law, and I don't want the Venice Commission interfering in how Hungarians raise their children," he said. Orbán said Hungary "had to use its own common sense" because "there's craziness in Europe, a wave of disrespect for the sole right of parents to raise their children, including their sex education." The government can protect the country's interests only if Hungarians support its efforts, he said. The prime minister accused Brussels of "blackmailing Hungary" over the child protection law issue. He added that Hungary would win the dispute, and recovery funding would be forthcoming sooner or later. In the meantime, the government is pre-financing the relevant projects, he

added. He said a "war of nerves" was taking place between the government and the EU. "If we Hungarians persevere, we'll win," he added. Orbán accused the EU of trying to intervene in the 2022 general election with a desire to stamp its mark on issues such as immigration, energy pricing and how children are raised. He said Brussels wanted a government in Hungary that says: "jawohl".

Meanwhile, Orbán noted the government's decision to give 33,000 small businesses and municipalities the chance to enter the government scheme that caps utility bills. Noting that opposition-run Budapest and Hódmezővásárhely planned to join it, he said the government considered the interests of locals over and above whoever happened to be in charge of the municipality. The related costs would be borne largely by multinationals, he said, though the Hungarian energy company MVM would also have to bear losses.

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## **ORBÁN: SUPPORT FOR SPORTS AT HUF 2,100 BN SINCE 2010**

The government has allocated 2,100 billion forints (EUR 5.8bn) for supporting sports since it came to power in 2010, to save the sector from "withering away" due to lack of funding for infrastructure and training, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said on Friday, inaugurating a swimming pool in Gödöllő, near Budapest. Thanks to government support, the number of competitive athletes has grown to

560,000, he said. The Gödöllő pool, which belongs to the Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences but also caters to the needs of the general public, is part of a detailed development plan the government has accepted in cooperation with the national swimming association, Orbán said. Since 2010, 35 swimming pools have been built and 10 revamped nationwide at a total cost of 180 billion forints, he said. Developing universities will contribute to propelling Hungary to the top of European Union countries, he said. Sándor Csányi, the head of the board of trustees at the university, thanked the government for the investment which "filled a huge gap" in the services in the region. High quality sports life is a key element of university training, that also serves the general public in the region, he said.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY, ROMANIA TO RECONVENE MIXED CTTEE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Hungary and Romania will reconvene their mixed committee for environmental protection, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Facebook on Thursday after talks with Barna Tanczos, Romania's minister for environmental protection. "Given that we have a lot of shared waters", with several rivers crossing the Romania-Hungary border, it is important that the two countries cooperate in the interest of preventing pollution, Szijjártó said.

Hungary and Romania will alert each other to instances of cross-border water pollution and will launch a joint scheme aimed at cleansing the River Tisza of plastic pollution, he said.

### **ÁDER: HUNGARY MAKING PROGRESS IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE**

Hungary has more work to do when it comes to environmental protection, but it must also recognise what it has achieved so far, President János Áder, chief patron of the Planet Budapest 2021 sustainability expo and world conference, told public television channel M5 on Thursday. Áder said that though some may be disappointed by the outcome of last month's United Nations COP26 climate conference in Glasgow, it was "still good news" that at the end of the summit the United States and China agreed to put aside their differences and enhance climate cooperation. The president highlighted the commitment by more than 100 countries to reverse forest loss by 2030 as another step in the right direction. He noted that after losing 90% of its forests under the WWI Trianon Peace Treaty a century ago, Hungary has been steadily increasing its forested areas.

Meanwhile, he said the three World Water Summits Budapest has organised so far had cost 1.5 billion forints (EUR 4.1m), but the business deals they yielded made them profitable for the state budget. On the topic of

sustainability, Áder said mankind should only consume resources that are naturally replaceable. Asked about the energy policy of the new German government, Áder said its decision to shut down coal-fired plants alongside nuclear plants and restrict gas power plants could "turn everything on its head". Until Germany creates the infrastructure for efficient energy supply and long-term storage capacities for cheap electricity, it will need conventional power plants, he said.

Concerning Hungary's energy mix, the president said 70% of the energy produced in the country was carbon-free, two-thirds of it nuclear energy and the rest renewables. Once the two new reactor blocks at the Paks nuclear plant are up and running and Hungary doubles the capacity of its solar plants, 90% of the energy generated in the country will be carbon-free, he added. Though Hungary's CO2 emissions have risen recently, this has been caused by increased international freight transport, he said. He noted Hungary's plan to replace its entire bus fleet with electric buses by 2030, adding that electric rubbish lorries were also increasingly common.

Áder also said Hungary was one of ten European Union countries that have reduced their CO2 emissions by more than 30% and one of 21 countries in the world that have been able to reduce their emissions while increasing their economic output. He noted that the government has also set the goal of not leaving any sewage untreated by 2030. At the same time, the president said Hungary still had more work to

do in other areas, such as boosting the energy efficiency of buildings.

### **PLANET BUDAPEST 2021 PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMMES END ON THURSDAY**

The Planet Budapest 2021 sustainability expo has drawn speakers from over 100 countries who discussed issues covering waste management, the circular economy, water management and climate change in 10 panel discussions, the commissioner responsible for the event said on Friday, after professional programmes of the event wrapped up on Thursday evening. Speakers included the representatives of the OECD, the International Energy Agency and "dozens of" ministry delegations, István Joó said. The panel discussions also pointed to central European developments offering solutions, he said. Some 500 business talks were conducted between 70 exhibitors, he said. The expo also saw over 180 exhibitors on 20,000sqm, Joó said.

### **FINMIN: CEE ENGINE OF EU GROWTH**

Three member states of the Central European Initiative (CEI) are among the European Union's five fastest-growing economies, Finance Minister Mihály Varga said after a meeting of CEI heads of government in Budva, Montenegro, on Friday. Meanwhile, a ministry statement cited Varga as saying that Hungary and the EU have a vested

interest in integrating the Western Balkans. Varga also said that during Europe's energy crisis, Hungary's top aim was to ensure a reliable and affordable energy supply. Although government measures already shield private consumers from rising energy prices, the government is always open to competitive solutions to expanding the resources and routes of energy supply, he said. To that end, Hungary also supports strengthening ties between CEI countries, he said. Regarding migration, Varga said uncontrolled illegal migration posed health, security, economic and cultural risks. From the very beginning, Hungary's stance was clear, he said: help should be taken to where it is needed, and managing migration was not an adequate solution. Hungary has strengthened border protection and calls on the EU to increase funding for that purpose, he said. The EU should cover half of the costs of the countries protecting the EU's external borders, he said.

### **PRESIDENT APPOINTS ANDRÁS KOLTAY TO HEAD MEDIA AUTHORITY**

President János Áder on Friday appointed András Koltay, the rector of the University of Public Administration (NKE), to head the National Media and Communications Authority (NMHH). Koltay was nominated for the post by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. The appointment carries a nine-year term. Koltay, a professor both at NKE and Pázmány Péter Catholic University, was

awarded a masters in law degree in 2007 from University College London. He previously studied at the International Institute of Human Rights in Strasbourg, and was awarded a PhD in 2008 from Pázmány Péter university's law faculty. His research has focused on freedom of expression, media law and the rights of the individual. He has been a member of the Media Council of the National Media and Communications Authority since October 2010. Koltay's predecessor, Mónika Karas, resigned on Oct. 15.

### **LMP: HUNGARY MUST PREPARE FOR PROLONGED ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN**

Hungary must prepare for the possibility of a prolonged economic slowdown due to the coronavirus pandemic, a lawmaker of opposition LMP said on Friday. More and more western European countries are bringing back lockdowns, which will also affect the Hungarian economy, Péter Ungár told an online press conference, predicting that the country's tourism sector would not recover until at least March next year. He said the government was not doing enough to ease the effects of the crisis on certain sectors and was only looking at macroeconomic indicators. "But GDP growth is no consolation to someone who has had to close their restaurant," Ungár argued. He pointed out that the Austrian government had paid out 50 times as much wage support money as the Hungarian government. He said the government should provide an 80% wage subsidy

to those who had lost their jobs during the pandemic and extend the period of eligibility for unemployment benefits from three months to nine.

### **MENCZER: BRUSSELS WANTS TO ORGANISE, FINANCE MIGRATION**

Brussels is in favour of organising and financing immigration into the European Union, Tamás Menczer, state secretary of the foreign ministry, said on Facebook. Referring to the EU's 2021-27 immigration action plan adopted earlier this week, Menczer cited the plan's fourth section as saying that Brussels intended to use the European Social Fund Plus, the Asylum and Migration Fund and the European Regional Development Fund to finance immigration. The Hungarian government opposes the funding and organisation of migration and insists that migration needs to be stopped, Menczer said.

### **HUNGARY RECORDS 10,143 NEW CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS, 191 DEATHS**

Altogether 191 patients died of a Covid-related illness over the past 24 hours, while 10,143 new coronavirus infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Friday. So far 6,145,984 people have received a first jab, while 5,858,119 have been fully vaccinated. Altogether 2,665,330 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections stands at 189,002, while hospitals are treating 7,463 Covid-19 patients, 566 of whom need

respiratory assistance. Since the first outbreak, 1,143,869 infections have been registered, while the number of fatalities has risen to 35,122. Fully 910,745 people have made a recovery. There are 60,555 people in official quarantine, while the number of tests taken stands at 8,559,975.

### **TOP COURT: COVID VACCINE MANDATE FOR HEALTH-CARE WORKERS LEGAL**

The government mandate requiring health-care workers to get vaccinated against Covid is not unconstitutional, as it serves the smooth functioning of the health-care system, the Constitutional Court ruled on Friday. Under the government decree making Covid vaccination mandatory for health-care workers, those refusing to get the jab are to be fired and are not entitled to severance pay. Health-care employees lodged hundreds of appeals with the

Constitutional Court challenging the constitutionality of the mandate. In its Friday resolution, the court rejected the complaints, saying that the vaccine mandate served to guarantee the smooth functioning of the health-care system, patient safety and the enforcement of patients' right to life and health. The vaccine mandate for health-care workers is constitutional and a "proportionate restriction", the court ruled. The Constitutional Court also cited the World Health Organization's (WHO) position that public health goals such as the containment of a pandemic warrant the use of legal coercion as a last resort.

### **GOVT SIGNS STRATEGIC COOPERATION AGREEMENT WITH ROCHE GROUP**

Hungary's government signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Swiss pharmaceutical group

Roche on Friday. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó noted that the agreement is the eighth such agreement the government has signed with a pharmaceutical company. He said that output of Hungary's pharmaceutical sector reached a record 963 billion forints last year, adding that around 85% of local output is exported.

### **HUNGARY RETAIL SALES UP 5.7% IN OCT**

Retail sales in Hungary grew by an annual 5.7% in October, down from 5.8% in the previous month, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Friday. The October increase was the same 5.7% when adjusted for calendar-year effects. Adjusted food sales grew by 3.4%, non-food sales by 6.3%, while vehicle fuel sales rose by 11.5%.