

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/György Varga

Snowdrops blooming in western Hungary

UPCOMING EVENTS

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

HUNGARY RECEIVES SPUTNIK LIGHT FOR TESTING

Eighty doses of the Russian Sputnik Light coronavirus vaccine arrived in Hungary for testing, prior to purchase talks with the manufacturer, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said.

The foreign ministry quoted Szijjártó as saying that the tests were the next step in Hungary's and Russia's cooperation in terms of vaccination against Covid. If Hungarian experts consider the new vaccine safe, effective, and suitable for a booster jab, talks on an order will ensue, Szijjártó said. Szijjártó noted that Sputnik Light was already distributed in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Argentina, and India, while a licence had been issued in San Marino, and it was being licensed in Serbia. "The more kinds of the vaccine Hungarians can choose from, the better," Szijjártó said, and encouraged residents to take booster jabs. Hungary began talks with Russia using Sputnik Light in the country in early December. The Sputnik V jab is being manufactured in two facilities in Hungary.

Meanwhile, Béla Merkely, the rector of Budapest's Semmelweis University, warned that the highly infectious Omicron variant can lead to large numbers of unvaccinated people needing hospital treatment. Those vaccinated could only experience mild ailments of the upper respiratory tract, he said.

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DEFENCE MINISTER: ARMY STAFF TO RECEIVE WAGE HIKES, BONUS PAY

Personnel of the Hungarian Armed Forces and defence employees will receive salary increases and a bonus payment this year in recognition of their achievements, the defence minister said on Friday. The monthly wage of soldiers has been raised by 10% as of this month and they will receive a bonus of six-month's pay in February, Tibor Benkő said in a video message posted on the defence ministry's Facebook page. Hungarian troops serving on international armed peace-keeping missions will this year receive a 10% increase on top of the 15% they got in 2021, the minister said. The wage increases that began in 2019 for defence employees will continue this year, he added. As regards the development of the armed forces, Benkő noted that the number of regular army staff, contracts and voluntary reserves had gone up by 13,000 since 2010. Benkő thanked soldiers for their outstanding efforts in fighting illegal migration and in pandemic defence. "They serve as a model of responsibility for the community, as 99% of them have already taken up a vaccine against Covid," the minister said.

ARMENIA'S CATHOLICOS KAREKIN II EXPRESSES THANKS TO ORBÁN

Catholicos Karekin II of Armenia has sent a letter of thanks to Prime

Minister Viktor Orbán for the Hungarian government's efforts enabling the release and return home of Armenian prisoners of war from Azerbaijan. Karekin II described the development as "a wonderful gift for Christmas and New Year's", and he praised Hungary's support for the Armenian nation and wished Hungarian people and officials a happy and successful new year. Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó announced on December 29 that earlier in the day, a Hungarian Army aircraft had first landed in Baku and then in Yerevan, transporting Armenian citizens.

HUNGARY RECORDS 6,524 NEW CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS, 101 DEATHS

Altogether 101 patients died of a Covid-related illness during the past 24 hours, while 6,524 new coronavirus infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Friday. So far 6,278,355 people have received a first jab, while 6,006,178 have been fully vaccinated. Fully 3,217,724 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections has risen to 105,529, while hospitals are treating 3,070 Covid-19 patients, 291 of whom are intubated on a ventilator. Since the first outbreak, 1,282,957 have been registered with the virus, while 39,780 deaths have been recorded. Fully 1,137,648 people have made a recovery.

KSH: INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT UP 2.6% IN NOV

Hungary's industrial output went up by an annual 2.6% in November,

rising again after two straight months of decline, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a first reading of data. Output of the automotive sector, which has the biggest weight in manufacturing in Hungary, fell "considerably" as companies scaled back production because of the global chip shortage, KSH said. Output of the computer, electronics and optical equipment segment "declined by a smaller rate", while output of "most manufacturing branches", including the food, drink and tobacco segment, "grew significantly", it added. Adjusted for the number of workdays, output rose by 2.1%. In a month-on-month comparison, output increased by a seasonally and workday-adjusted 2.9%. For the period January-November, output rose by an annual 9.9%, KSH said.

Takarékbank chief analyst Gergely Suppan said industrial output might have risen 9-12% were it not for the chip shortage which has dragged output back under pre-crisis levels. He said full-year industrial output could grow by 10% in 2022 and 5-6% next year on base effects and new capacities starting up. ING Bank senior analyst Péter Virovác said that while Hungary's two most important manufacturing segments – automotive and computer, electronics and optical equipment – are still struggling with shortages, their poor performance seem to have been offset by a combination of other branches of the manufacturing sector, which he called particularly promising.

KSH: RETAIL SALES UP 3.8% IN NOV

Retail sales in Hungary rose by an annual 3.8% in November, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Friday. The increase slowed from 5.7% in the previous month. Adjusted for calendar year effects, retail sales also rose by 3.8%. Adjusted food sales increased by 2.1% and non-food sales were up 4.9%. Vehicle fuel sales climbed by 6.2%. Sales of clothing and footwear shops climbed 29.0%, sales of second-hand shops increased by 27.9%, sales of pharmacies rose by 11.3% and sales of book and computer shops were up 6.6%. Online and mail-order sales edged up 0.9% from a high base. Sales of furniture and appliance stores fell by 7.4%. In absolute terms, retail sales reached 1,276 billion forints (EUR 5.3bn), at current prices. For the period January-November, retail sales rose by an annual 3.2%, according to both unadjusted and adjusted data. Adjusted food sales were up 2.1%, non-food sales rose by 4.5% and vehicle fuel sales increased by 4.4%.

ING Bank chief analyst Péter Virovác said November retail sales growth

remained well below expectations, which he attributed to lower vehicle fuel sales, possibly related to the fourth wave of the pandemic, and the higher inflation rate. Takarékbank chief analyst Gergely Suppan said retail sales probably grew by around 3.4% last year and forecast full-year retail sales growth of 11% next year on base effects, a close to 19% minimum wage increase, public sector pay rises, tax refunds for parents raising children and a pensioners' bonus.

HOUSE OF HUNGARIAN MUSIC TO OPEN GATES ON JAN 23

The House of Hungarian Music will open its gates on January 23 in Budapest's City Park, and offer concerts, workshops, music pedagogy sessions and other programmes aimed at reaching new audiences, operative director Márton Horn told a press conference on Friday. In the first week after the opening, students of the Budapest Liszt Academy will offer free concerts. Tickets for concerts from January 28th, featuring performers of classical, pop, world, jazz music and many other genres, will be available

on the magyarzenehaza.com website from Friday, Horn said. The new concert house was built as part of the Liget Budapest Project, aimed at revamping Budapest's City Park. Designed by Japanese star architect Sou Fujimoto, the House of Hungarian Music topped the World Architecture Community's (WAC) list of ten most anticipated buildings in 2021.

HUNGARIAN 'ATHLETES OF THE YEAR' ELECTED

Sprint canoeist Tamara Csipes and fencer Áron Szilágyi have been elected Hungary's Athletes of the Year by the country's sports journalists. The coach of the year title went to András Decsi of the fencing team. The women's water polo team won the category of team competitions in traditional team sports and the women's kayak team of Dóra Bodonyi, Tamara Csipes, Anna Kárász and Danuta Kozák won the category of team competitions in individual sports. Parakayaker Péter Pál Kiss and para swimmer Bianka Pap won in the disabled sports categories. The prizes were awarded at a gala at the National Theatre in Budapest late on Thursday.