

Hungary virus deaths hit record as criticism mounts

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Coronavirus deaths and cases hit new highs in Hungary on Friday amid growing criticism over Prime Minister Viktor Orban's second-wave coronavirus strategy.

Record highs of 103 daily COVID-19-related deaths and 4,709 new infections were recorded, with 5,489 [coronavirus](#) patients in hospital

including 391 on ventilators.

Orban said in an interview Friday that Hungary's hospital intensive care bed capacity of 4,480 could be reached by December 10.

A decision on postponing elective operations will be made within days or hours, he added.

"We see the end of the tunnel, we have more and more good news about vaccines, we will have soon some kind of vaccine," said Orban.

Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said in a statement Thursday that Hungary will begin importing "small quantities of vaccines" in December from Russia for clinical trials.

He said that "large quantities" of the [vaccine](#) would be delivered to Hungary "from the second and third weeks of January".

The relatively early lockdown Orban imposed in March helped spare Hungary the worst of the first wave of the pandemic.

But since the [second wave](#) began in Hungary at the end of the summer, Orban has avoided reimposing similarly restrictive measures.

On Tuesday he reintroduced a state of emergency that enables rule by decree, but so far has resisted calls for tougher action.

Schools remain open, while there are no limits on gatherings or movement, other than a night-time curfew brought in from Wednesday.

"People want Hungary to continue to function, the economy as well as lives must be protected," Orban has said previously.

But an official in the Hungarian Medical Chamber warned Friday that Hungary's hospitals could soon be overwhelmed.

"Without stricter government measures to slow the growth of the epidemic, that could happen within weeks rather than months," Tamas Sved told the Nepszava newspaper.

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