

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zoltán Máthé

Old-timer buses in central Budapest

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**President Áder's New Year address**

**Cardinal Erdő celebrates New Year mass in St. Stephen's Basilic**

**Sant Egidio community marks World Peace Day**

## TOP STORY

# SZIJJÁRTÓ: JUNCKER NOT A CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT

Hungary's foreign minister has savaged Jean-Claude Juncker for his comments suggesting that Hungary's ruling party pursued policies at odds with European Union values.

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker's "lecturing" others about Christian Democracy "is a bad joke", the Hungarian foreign minister said in a statement. Péter Szijjártó insisted that Juncker "has not been a Christian Democrat for a long time and he is in fact a liberal, pro-migration politician". "Juncker has laid wreaths at Marx's monument and commemorated Fidel Castro," he said. In the meantime, "migrants flooded Europe and the Brits left the EU under his presidency," the minister added.

Earlier in the day, Germany's Welt am Sonntag quoted Juncker as saying that the policies of Hungary's ruling Fidesz were incompatible with Christian Democratic values. Answering a question why he allowed Prime Minister Viktor Orbán "get away with his anti-EU rants", Juncker said he was locked in a dispute with Orbán and he had pressed for Fidesz's exclusion from the European People's Party.

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## **VARGA ANNOUNCES 8% MINIMUM WAGE HIKE FOR 2019, 2020**

The minimum wage in Hungary will increase by 8% on Jan. 1, the finance minister said. The wage will go up by another 8 % a year later, Mihály Varga told a press conference after a two-year agreement was reached at talks in the permanent conference of employer, employee, and government representatives (VKF). On January 1, 2019, the increase will bring the gross minimum wage to 149,000 forints (EUR 461) and the guaranteed gross minimum wage -- the minimum wage for employees with certain qualifications -- to 195,000 forints (EUR 604). According to a finance ministry statement, all social partners of the government accepted the agreement except for trade union federation MaSzSz.

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## **OFFICIAL: GOVT TO EXPAND HOME CREATION SCHEME IN 2019**

The government will continue and expand its home purchase subsidy scheme (CSOK) next year, the state secretary for family and youth affairs said. More than 92,000 families have availed themselves of the subsidy since the programme's introduction in 2015, Katalin Novák told a news conference. She noted that next year's budget allocates 242 billion forints (EUR 752.8m) for the scheme, the most the government has ever spent on the programme. The state secretary also noted

that the government has raised subsidies available for families raising two children to 10 million forints. Prior to December 1, 10 million forint loans were available only to families with three or more children. At the same time, the credit limit for families with three children has been raised to 15 million forints, she added.

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## **ORBÁN TO SEND LETTER TO SUPPORTERS**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán will contact supporters of his Fidesz party in a letter early in January, concerning next year's European Parliamentary elections, the communications director of the party said. Balázs Hidvéghi said that the upcoming election would be more important than any such vote in the past, and insisted that "Brussels has not learnt from a series of terrorist attacks and continues its efforts to make Europe an immigrant destination". "We, Hungarians, cannot accept that," he said, and added that "we need MEPs that represent Hungary in Brussels." Fidesz's candidates will "uncompromisingly promote Hungarian interests in the European Parliament", Hidvéghi said.

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## **PM OFFICE HEAD: LEFT- LIBERAL OPPOSITION RESPONSIBLE FOR 'VIOLENCE' IN PARLT**

It is the left-liberal opposition's responsibility that "physical intimidation and violence" have appeared as "a tool" in parliament, the head of the Prime Minister's Office said in an interview

published by news portal PestiSracok.hu. In general everyone carries responsibility for the deterioration of relations of Hungarian public life, Gergely Gulyás told the portal. But the opposition carries the sole responsibility for what took place during plenary sessions in parliament and at demonstrations on the streets over the past weeks, Gulyás said. "We are democrats, we will turn to the electorate to draw the political responsibility, and it is not our job to assign legal responsibility." The labour code amendment's approval in parliament served clearly as an excuse for the demonstrations, Gulyás said.

Although Hungarian law allows lawmakers to enter public institutions, it also stipulates that they shall not disrupt its normal operation, he said. The opposition's demonstration at the public broadcaster's headquarters last week to have their petition read on air constituted just that, he added.

There is no mass support behind these demonstrations, he insisted. "We will ask voters that if they want a normal democratic state governed by the rule of law where decisions are not enforced by a minority in politics they should support the allied ruling parties in the upcoming European Parliamentary elections," he said.

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## **POLICE PASS ON COMPLAINT BY OPPOSITION MPS REMOVED FROM MEDIA HEADQUARTERS**

Budapest police have passed on to the central investigative prosecutor's office

a complaint by opposition deputies who were removed from public media MTVA headquarters earlier in the month. A statement on police.hu said that press reports blaming the police for failing to investigate the complaints were “incorrect” since they were not empowered to do so. Citing the law on penal procedures, “violence against a person with immunity” should be investigated by the prosecutor.

The complaint was filed by Bernadett Szél, an independent MP, formerly a member of the LMP group, on Dec. 17. The previous night, a group of opposition MPs who were demonstrating against the passage of changes to the labour code entered MTVA headquarters and demanded that a petition be broadcast. After a sit-in for several hours, Szél and Ákos Hadházy, another independent and former LMP deputy, were forcibly removed from the building by security staff.

### **JOBBIK: ‘FREE, PREDICTABLE’ HUNGARY AT STAKE IN EP ELECTIONS**

The outcome of next year’s European Parliamentary elections will determine “whether we can build a free, liveable and predictable Hungary in a safe Europe”, the group leader of conservative Jobbik told a press conference. Márton Gyöngyösi said

that his party offers predictable policies as against the prime minister’s “policy of isolation” and insisted that “Viktor Orbán wants to drive Hungary out of the European Union”. On behalf of his party, Gyöngyösi pledged “protection against illegal migration”, efforts aimed at allowing Hungarians to prosper in their homeland rather than seek jobs abroad, as well as support to ethnic Hungarian communities in their fight for autonomy.

Jobbik will name its candidates for the EP elections late in January or early February, he said.

### **DEMO STAGED IN BUDAPEST AGAINST REMOVAL OF IMRE NAGY MEMORIAL**

The leftist Democratic Coalition (DK) and the Nagy Imre Society held a demonstration against the removal of the martyred 1956 prime minister’s memorial from Martyrs’ Square near Parliament.

The memorial, a bronze statue of Imre Nagy on a bridge, was removed in the early hours of Friday, with Tamás Wachsler, the chief coordinator of reconstruction of the area, citing the square’s rehabilitation as a reason. The memorial will be moved to Jászai Mari Square near Margaret Bridge, he said. A reconstructed post-WWI

monument dedicated to the martyrs of the communist Red Terror in 1919 will take its place, he said.

Demonstrators lit candles at the former site of the statue on Friday afternoon. Former MP Imre Mécs, who was also sentenced to death after the 1956 uprising and served years in prison, called for the memorial to be restored to its previous place. DK’s MEP Csaba Molnár said that the statue was a memento of the power of the people and the nation that will not tolerate tyranny. Gergely Órsi, a Budapest councillor of the opposition Socialists, called the memorial’s removal a “shameless act on the government’s part which again brought people on the streets”, and called for the memorial’s restoration to Martyrs’ Square.

### **HUNGARIAN FESTIVALS IN ISRAEL, JAPAN, S KOREA, CHINA IN 2019**

A Hungarian cultural festival will be organised in Israel, Japan, South Korea and China next year, according to the official gazette Magyar Közlöny’s Thursday edition. The festivals will mark the anniversaries of Hungary’s diplomatic ties with these countries. On the anniversaries’ occasion Hungary will open cultural institutions in Tokyo and Seoul.