

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/János Vajda

Marking Epiphany, Greek Catholic bishop Atanáz Orosz consecrates Bódva Creek in Edelény, northern Hungary

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Stats office first estimate on retail trade in Nov 2018**

**Govt signs strategic partnership agreement with Tungsram group**

## TOP STORY

# FIDESZ: ANTI-GOVT PROTESTERS ON SOROS PAYROLL

The parliamentary group leader of ruling Fidesz said participants in recent demonstrations against new overtime regulations included organisations that are on US billionaire George Soros's payroll.

Saturday's demonstration was already part of the campaign for the European parliamentary elections, in which voters will be given a chance to decide whether anti-migration forces should become stronger or weaker in the EP, Máté Kocsis said in public Kossuth Radio.

Opposition parties on Saturday called for further protests, another change of regime and building a new republic, while trade unions announced nationwide demonstrations for January 19.

Kocsis accused the participating parties of supporting migration and Soros who he said "had lined up his people in Hungary for the battle".

"The opposition parties' idea to run on a joint list in the European parliamentary election in May means that there will be an anti-migration list where votes for Fidesz-Christian Democrats can be cast and there will be a 'Soros list' for those who support migration and Soros," he said.

Anti-government protests are under way in several countries around Europe where the governments are anti-migration, Kocsis said.

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## **UNIONS, OPPOSITION PARTIES CALL FOR NATIONWIDE DEMONSTRATIONS**

An anti-government demonstration was held in Budapest on Saturday in protest against recent amendments to the labour code. Organised on Facebook, the demonstration was dubbed "National protest against the slave laws" and joined by opposition parties, unions and civil organisations.

The demonstrators gathering on Heroes' Square were chanting "we won't be slaves" and "Fidesz mafia". The crowd moved through Andrassy Avenue towards the Parliament building.

Addressing the participants, László Kordás, head of the TU confederation MSZOSZ, said that they would present a list of demands to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on Tuesday and give the government five days to set up a negotiating committee. If the government fails to set up the committee by deadline, the unions will hold a nationwide warning strike, and protesters will block roads and bridges, he said. The trade unions are prepared for "a militant period" because the government has "made a deal with capitalists" and "chose to side with heinous profit-hunters", he said. Head of the teachers' trade union PDSZ Tamás Szűcs called for action and said there was no reason to fear from strikes because they were the only way to succeed and force those in power to back off.

Socialist leader Bertalan Tóth said that unity has been created between opposition forces both in parliament and in the streets. He called on the opposition parties to cooperate in both the European and local elections later this year. He said the opposition parties should field joint candidates everywhere.

Conservative opposition Jobbik spokesman Péter Jakab said a petition would be launched against the "slave law".

Opposition DK deputy leader Csaba Molnár said even if Prime Minister Viktor Orbán backs off and withdraws the labour code amendments, they would not stop because they are "rebellious" against the entire regime not just specific laws.

Opposition LMP lawmaker Antal Csárdi said four million employees were affected by the "slave law", so the main task was to get it withdrawn and the labour code to be revised. He called the trade unions and other opposition parties for consultations on January 9. Opposition Párbeszéd co-leader Gergely Karácsony said the government was unable to apply the dictatorial tactics of "divide and rule" against the protesters.

Independent lawmaker Bernadett Szél said "the world must not belong to the populists and Hungary must not belong to Orbán". Liberals executive and independent lawmaker Anett Bósz said that Hungary's rule of law and democracy would have to be restored. Momentum deputy leader Anna Donáth said Hungarians were not slaves.

## **PROTESTS STAGED AGAINST LABOUR CHANGES IN COUNTRYSIDE**

Opposition parties and civil groups staged demonstrations to protest against recent changes to the labour code in several Hungarian cities last weekend.

In Pécs, in southern Hungary, LMP co-leader László Lóránt Keresztes said that "the ruling parties have now rejected all they used to promote... and have sold out the country's independence to the Russians". Balázs Nemes, local leader of the Momentum Movement, told some 500 participants that "this is our homeland and we won't let them steal it... 2019 will be a year for resistance".

The protesters demanded that the government should be ousted, and marched to the city centre carrying the national colours, the flag of the European Union as well as the red and white stripes associated with the extreme right.

Some 250 people demonstrated in Szombathely, in western Hungary, where LMP's Gábor Vágó spoke in his address about "unprecedented corruption" in government circles. Local Democratic Coalition deputy Tímea Glázer said that "they should have spent a lot more money on hospitals rather than on sports stadiums".

The protesters walked to the local office of ruling Fidesz, and left a large sign that read "We are not slaves" across its windows.

In Szolnok, in central Hungary, some 300 people gathered to protest against the new labour code rules. Addressing the event Momentum board member Katalin Cseh described 2019 as a year of resistance.

Some 250 demonstrators gathering in front of the city hall of Debrecen promised to join the nationwide protests announced for January 19. The event was addressed by representatives of the opposition Socialists, Jobbik, LMP, Momentum parties and trade unions. The speakers demanded that the "slave law" should be withdrawn and former Debrecen mayor Lajos Kósa should leave public life.

### **POTÁPI: GOVT COMMITTED TO STRENGTHENING NATIONAL COHESION**

Hungary's government is committed to strengthening national cohesion among all Hungarians, regardless of whether they live in the Carpathian Basin or in any other part of the world, the state secretary in charge of Hungarian communities abroad said at an event marking the 255th anniversary of the massacre at Madéfalva.

The government is making every effort to help people who want to preserve their Hungarian identity to remain Hungarian, Árpád János Potápi said in a Szekler memorial park in Bonyhád in southern Hungary. "We will also make every effort to help towns and villages in Szekler land achieve their goals," the state secretary said.

It was partly thanks to the Hungarian government's efforts that a memorial to the massacre of 1764 has been revamped and a new chapel built next to it in Siculeni (Madéfalva), he added.

More than 200 Szekler men, women and children were killed by the Habsburg army in 1764 because of a revolt in the village. Thousands of the local Szeklers migrated to Bukovina after the massacre, retaining their traditions. The Bukovina Szeklers, as they came to be known, migrated to Vojvodina in 1941, but were forced to flee to the south of Hungary in 1944 and 1945, settling in localities such as Bonyhád.

### **JOBBIK TO APPEAL REJECTION OF REFERENDUM INITIATIVES LINKED TO 'SLAVE LAW'**

The conservative opposition Jobbik party will submit an appeal to the Kúria, Hungary's supreme court, against a decision by the National Election Committee, which rejected its referendum initiatives linked to "despotic measures dubbed Fidesz's slave law," lawmaker Tamás Pintér said. He said it was "a totally ridiculous response" that the committee threw out the initiatives claiming that they were ambiguous.

"What can be ambiguous about asking people if they want to live in Hungary as slaves and what can be ambiguous about asking them if they want to spend their free time at home, with their families, rather

than at their place of work," Pintér said. Such questions could have been clearly answered in a referendum if the "National Election Committee had not been an organisation run by [ruling] Fidesz and if Fidesz had not been afraid of the will of the people," he said. "Hungarian employees should be given a chance to decide on their lives, their overtime and how they get paid for it. It is not Fidesz that should decide about these issues on the order of multinational companies," he said.

The election committee rejected the referendum initiatives concerning mandatory overtime rules and the deadline for payment for overtime work. It argued that since the initiatives were submitted, the related bill has been amended with a stipulation that all overtime work must be based on a voluntary agreement.

### **GOVT OFFICIAL MARKS MEMORIAL DAY OF SAINT THOMAS OF CANTERBURY**

For Hungarians Christianity means not only theological traditions but also a social setting which has determined the conditions for human dignity, the family, the nation, the state and the church for more than a thousand years, state secretary for security policy Péter Sztáray said in a lecture marking the 25th memorial day of Saint Thomas of Canterbury in Esztergom, in northern Hungary.

"We have a people's party government which rules in the spirit of Christian democracy ... we have built a

Christian democracy for the 21st century which guarantees human dignity, freedom and security, protects equal rights between men and women and the traditional family model, holds anti-Semitism at bay, defends our Christian culture and gives a chance for our nation to survive and prosper," he said.

Hungarians today expect Hungary and Europe to recognise the importance of Christianity and they see Europe as a Europe of nations which does not exclude others but insists on its values, Sztáray said.

Human Resources Minister Miklós Kásler held a lecture presenting changes in state and church organisation over history and the event was also addressed by Iain Lindsay, UK Ambassador to Hungary, partly in Hungarian.

Ties between the archiepiscopal seats of Esztergom and Canterbury go back to the 12th century, when Thomas Becket and Lukács Bánfi, who would become the Archbishop of Esztergom, formed a friendship during their studies in Paris. Some of the saint's relics were salvaged and kept in Esztergom from 1538 after King

Henry VIII ordered their destruction. After more than four centuries, Cardinal László Lékai donated some of them to the Archiepiscopacy of Canterbury.

### **CONJOINED BANGLADESHI TWINS ARRIVE IN BUDAPEST FOR TREATMENT**

Conjoined Bangladeshi twins Rabeya and Rokaiya have arrived in Budapest for treatment and preparations for separation surgery by a Hungarian medical team of the Action For Defenceless People Foundation, the Semmelweis University said.

The twins are joined by the skulls but their brains are separate. They are now in Hungary for diagnostics and preparatory examinations, as well as special plastic surgery for tissue expansion to prepare them for the main operation that will involve separating their skulls, under the supervision of Hungarian neurosurgeon András Csókay.

Two surgeries had already been performed on them in Bangladesh, by Hungarian neurosurgeon István

Hudák. The plastic surgery to be carried out in Budapest will be performed by Gergely Pataki.

The twins are in good health and their family has high hopes for the success of the series of operations, the statement said.

### **2018 HOTTEST YEAR ON RECORD IN HUNGARY**

The year 2018 was the hottest year on record in Hungary, with temperatures rising faster than the rate of global warming, the national weather service said.

The records kept since 1901 show that the average temperature for Hungary was 11.99 degrees Celsius last year, the weather service said citing an analysis prepared for MTI. This was 1.66 degrees Celsius above the average measured for the period 1981-2010.

Of the ten hottest years on record, eight have been since 2000. The rate of warming since 1901 has been 1.23 degrees Celsius, which is slightly above the global figure, the weather service said.