

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Tibor Rosta

Hot-air balloon festival in Orosháza

UPCOMING EVENTS

Szijjártó meets Bulgarian deputy PM

Demographic summit continues

3rd Budapest Film Classics Marathon presser

Stats office releases industry data, foreign trade turnover for July

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: NATIONS COULD END UP DISAPPEARING

Without families and children, a national community could end up disappearing, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in a speech to the 3rd Budapest Demographic Summit.

"If a nation disappears, something irreplaceable disappears from the world," Orbán said at the event held in the Várkert Bazaar, where he said one of the state's goals and the government's task was to pursue a vigorous demographic policy. The prime minister said the "solution of immigration" and the "mindless green argument that the Earth would be better off with fewer births" were off the table when it came to the issue of demography. Hungary's family support scheme would only reach a turning point when those who decide to have children enjoyed a higher standard of living than if they had opted against having children, he said. Hungary's family policy is based on the concept and conviction that every child has a right to have a father and a mother, Orbán said and that a family and children are prerequisites of "the biological reproduction of a national community". The Hungarian family support model rests on a foundation that has "a constitutional nature", Orbán said, adding that this was essential for pursuing a long-term family policy.

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ORBÁN: CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS PROTECT HUNGARY

Constitutional foundations protect Hungary against court rulings that are detrimental to families and against attempts by “anti-family” international organisations, NGOs and networks “to penetrate” into the country’s state affairs and decision-making, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in a speech to the 3rd Budapest Demographic Summit.

Good family policy needs economic foundations as well, Orbán said, noting that allocations in the central budget to support families had doubled over the past ten years. The prime minister highlighted the need for a predictable family support system over the long term.

Orbán said the key to the success of Hungary’s demographic policy was “Christianity regaining its strength in Europe”. Partners in this endeavour such as Serbia and the Czech Republic, represented at the summit at presidential and prime ministerial level, are already on board, Orbán added.

The prime minister said the demographic policy’s success would be ensured if the country’s annual economic growth rate exceeded the EU average by at least 2 percentage points between now and 2030.

Orbán said there was abundant scepticism in Europe as to whether Hungary could achieve its demographic policy goal of a 2.1 fertility rate. But those people said the same before about other Hungarian

government measures such as “sending home the IMF”, introducing a banking tax and a progressive income tax, levying a tax on multinational companies, cutting utility costs, creating one million jobs in ten years, stopping migration and building a border fence, he added.

House Speaker László Kövér said at the conference that “having children is a public affair of the most personal kind” and suggested that it should be made “the most important public issue in social, economic, cultural, and political terms” in each European country to help the bloc survive.

Katalin Novák, state secretary for family and youth affairs, emphasised the importance of addressing the issue of demography. “The responses we give to demographic challenges will determine our future from a cultural, economic and social point of view,” she said.

“Demography in 2019 is not just one of the many issues to be addressed, it is the most important common issue for us,” she said. Europe has become a continent of “empty cradles”, while several countries in other continents such as Africa and Asia are facing challenges posed by overpopulation, she added.

Addressing the summit, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić called it important that demographic changes were being addressed as one of today’s top challenges and an issue that calls for immediate action. Vučić also emphasised the gravity of Europe’s demographic woes in terms of the future of central Europe, and

the need for the continent as a whole to find solutions to the problem. He said Serbia was ready to cooperate with Hungary and the other central European countries in tackling the issue.

Andrej Babiš, the Czech prime minister, said the effects of a population decline on Europe could be almost as severe as those of climate change.

Tony Abbott, Australia’s former prime minister, advocated a policy that sees family support as a means of promoting population growth in place of immigration. He praised Hungary’s family support scheme as unique, saying it should be studied by other countries.

Migration and border protection were in the focus of bilateral talks between Orbán and the former Australian PM. Both agreed that every country had the right to determine whom they allow to enter its territory and with what conditions, Bertalan Havasi, the PM’s spokesman, said. Europe should follow the Australian and Hungarian practice of border control if it is serious about protecting its own citizens, Orbán and Abbott agreed at their meeting.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: COMMON V4 POSITIONS IN HUNGARY’S INTEREST

The common positions taken by the Visegrad Group countries are “fully in line” with Hungary’s national interests, and upholding them is therefore also in Hungary’s interest, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said

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in Warsaw, addressing a meeting of Polish ambassadors at the invitation of his counterpart Jacek Czaputowicz. Szijjártó said the Visegrad Group cooperation had proven itself the strongest and most effective alliance within the European Union in recent years. He said the alliance comprising the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia had remained successful despite efforts by the international media and the “political elite” to “tear it apart”. “Perhaps few would have thought in the past couple of years that we’d mount a successful challenge against the mandatory migrant quota scheme,” the minister said. “I think many people believed there was little chance we could prevent the appointment of Frans Timmermans as European Commission president.”

“There’s a completely false and deceitful depiction of the Visegrad Group within the European Union: they’re trying to position us as a kind of black sheep and paint us as an entity going against European unity, whereas the reality is that we want a strong Europe, but we think that this requires strong member states,” he said. “We believe that if European nations stay strong and insist on preserving their national identity, cultural, religious and historical heritage, then we can build a strong European Union again together,” the minister added. He said that although this position was in the minority in the EU today, it was still a European one.

The V4 agree that central Europe’s competitiveness can be traced back to a responsible economic policy, “which

is why we refuse to support any western European proposals that would lead to tax hikes in Hungary or central Europe or those aimed at debt communitisation”, Szijjártó said, adding that the V4 firmly believed that central Europe was a contributor to Europe’s economic performance, arguing that four out of the bloc’s five fastest-growing member states were central European countries, and three of them Visegrad countries.

ÁDER: HUNGARY BACKS GEORGIA'S EURO-ATLANTIC ASPIRATIONS

Hungary will continue to support Georgia’s territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders as well as the country’s aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration, President János Áder said after talks with his Georgian counterpart in Tbilisi. At a press conference held jointly with Salome Zourabichvili, Áder, who is the first Hungarian president to visit Georgia since 1990, expressed hope that the new European Commission would give momentum to Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic integration. Concerning bilateral ties, Áder said the two country’s tourism relations were given a significant boost by the launch of a direct flight between Budapest and Tbilisi five years ago, adding that more similar steps should be taken in the future. The president named water management as another area for potential bilateral cooperation, noting that water purification was crucial for Georgia’s industrial development and

agriculture. Hungary can also be of help to Georgia when it comes to the utilisation of its thermal water supply, he added. As regards Georgia’s plans to produce electric vehicles, Áder said he saw an opportunity for the country to test its cars at Hungarian tracks in cooperation with China. On the topic of cultural ties, Áder promised to help Georgian artists receive invitations to perform in Hungary.

Zourabichvili said he and Áder had also discussed the situation of Georgia’s Russian-occupied South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions. He said political negotiations needed to take on a different form in order to improve the current situation regarding those territories. He thanked Áder for Hungary’s participation in the European Union’s mission in Georgia tasked with monitoring the border areas of the two regions. Zourabichvili underlined the support his country has received from Hungary in connection with its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. Turning to bilateral ties, the president said Georgia was also counting on Hungary’s experience in economic development. He said Georgian students were being given a “huge opportunity” by getting the chance to take part in student exchange programmes in Hungary.

MATOLCSY CALLS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPING HUNGARY GROWTH MODEL

The growth model of the Hungarian economy needs to be developed further to put the country on a

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sustainable catch-up path in the long term, the governor of the National Bank told an economic conference in Nyíregyháza, in north-east Hungary. György Matolcsy said the current “economic climate change” called for new approaches.

Concerning the Hungarian economy, Matolcsy said that the country’s net external debt would be repaid by 2021, adding that in economic terms Hungary had recently turned from being one of the most vulnerable countries to one of the less vulnerable ones. Despite that fact, he warned that “12 plus one threats” are facing Europe’s economic development, affecting Hungary’s ability to narrow the gap with more developed EU countries.

Matolcsy said the world was on the way to a new system of exchange “based on information and energy” in

which “information is the new gold”. Among the challenges he mentioned “the looming effect of a hard Brexit”, a slowdown in the German economy and the possibility of a trade war between the US and China spilling over into other regions, with a potentially serious impact on Hungary’s ability to narrow the gap with its richer peers. Matolcsy urged the implementation of the central bank’s programme to improve Hungary’s competitiveness. He also suggested that internal demand in general should be improved, while certain specific industries may need central support.

NEW APP FOR DRIVERS PARKING IN CENTRAL BUDAPEST

A free app to help drivers find parking spaces in central Budapest has been

unveiled. The app shows where free parking spaces are on a map and navigates drivers to the space before completing payment. Péter Szentgyörgyvölgyi (Fidesz-KDNP), the mayor of the fifth district said in a statement on Thursday that the iOS and Android app currently covers 1,500 parking spaces in the city centre, mainly in the south of the district, but by the end of next year the system will be rolled out across the whole the district. The central Budapest district operates a parking system aimed at easing traffic, allowing the district’s residents to use underground car parks, and so far 300 residents make regular use of this opportunity. Some of the district’s parking fee revenue is ploughed back into developments that benefit both district residents and other drivers in Budapest, the statement said.