**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2014**

“...they control 55 to 60 percent of advertising locations...”

On designated places, something which the opposition says in his favor. Whereas in previous elections, political and sometimes controversial legislation, has tweaked the boards. Only 14 were genuinely for the opposition, according to an AFP count.

Lorev, 60 kilometres (40 miles) to the south, out of 81 billboards, already appears to have won the battle of the billboards. Posters proclaim... The posters. Three of them will appear on the sides of trams, even though the campaign officially began only last Sunday.

But critics say this is because Orban, 50, who has come under fire and home and abroad for a raft of sweeping and sometimes controversial legislation, has tweaked the system in his favor. Whereas in previous elections, political parties could plaster every tree and lamppost across the land with posters, this is now banned. Now they are only allowed on designated places, something which the opposition says gives Fidesz a massive and unfair advantage since many of these are owned by people close to the party.

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis yesterday urged cardinals gathered to discuss family-related issues such as contraception, cohabitation, divorce and gay relationships to be “intelligent, courageous and loving” in their debate. He was opening two days of closed-door sessions with some 185 cardinals from around the world to prepare for an autumn synod of bishops that will discuss the issues at greater length.

They are called to make known God’s magnificent love...”

Addressing the gathering of cardinals, Francis called the family the “fundamental cell of society” and indirectly re-stated the Catholic Church’s opposition to gay marriage. “From the beginning the Creator blessed man and woman so that they might be fruitful and multiply,” he said, calling the family an image of “God in the world”. Francis has had a packed week of meetings about reform with top Church officials in Rome before ceremonies on Saturday when he will elevate 19 prelates to the rank of cardinal. The first three days of sessions focused on overhaul of the Vatican’s often troubled finances.

A select group of eight cardinals from around the world advising the Pope gave him their proposals on Wednesday, with one suggesting a new central economic ministry that would incorporate the Holy See’s scandal-plagued bank. The eight cardinals from Italy, Chile, India, Germany, Democratic Republic of Congo, the United States, Australia and Honduras are advising Francis on how to reform the Curia, the Vatican’s often dysfunctional central administration. — Reuters

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**CLEAN SWEEP FOR ORBAN BILLBOARDS IN HUNGARY**

LOREV: Six weeks out from a general election in Hungary, campaign billboards, perhaps surprisingly, are dominated by faces of the three main challengers to right-wing Prime Minister Viktor Orban. But in Orban’s Hungary, things are often not as they seem. A closer look reveals his centre-left challengers all guiltily holding ID cards in a police line-up, and that these are pro-government ads. This trio of shifty-looking usual suspects, Socialists leader Attila Mesterhazy and former prime ministers Ferenc Gyurcsany and Gordon Bajnai, “don’t deserve another chance”, the posters proclaim. Each is seen with power with a two-thirds majority for his Fidesz party in 2010, polls indicate that Orban is on course to win another term on April 6. He already appears to have won the battle of the billboards.

On a recent drive between Budapest and the town of Lorev, 60 kilometres (40 miles) to the south, out of 81 billboards only 14 were genuinely for the opposition, according to an AFP count.

But critics say this is because Orban, 50, who has come under fire and home and abroad for a raft of sweeping and sometimes controversial legislation, has tweaked the system in his favor. Whereas in previous elections, political parties could plaster every tree and lamppost across the land with posters, this is now banned. Now they are only allowed on designated places, something which the opposition says gives Fidesz a massive and unfair advantage since many of these are owned by people close to the party.

Brooks is first in the witness box, where she described her early career in journalism and her work for the Sun and News of the World. Shortly before she began giving evidence, the judge declared that she had no case to answer in one charge against her, that of conspiring to commit misconduct in public office.

Brooks was accused of sanctioning a payment of £4,000 ($6,700, 4,900 euros) to a public official for a picture of Prince William dressed as a bikini-clad Bond girl at a party at Sandhurst, the British army’s officer training school. The image was never published but led to a story in The Sun in September 2006 with the headline “Willy in a Bikini” together with a mocked-up picture of the second-in-line to the throne in a green swimsuit.

Brooks edited the News of the World from 2000 to 2003, when she moved to edit its sister paper The Sun, until 2006. Judge John Saunders ordered the jury to deliver a not guilty verdict on the charge, saying: “I have decided that there is no case for Ms Brooks to answer on count four. That is the charge relating to a picture of Prince William in a bikini.”

Brooks smiled as she was acquitted, although the still faces charges of conspiring to hack phones, paying an official for information and two counts of conspiring to pervert the course of justice.

**POPE TELLS CARDINALS TO TACKLE DIVISIVE ISSUES**

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**BROOKS TAKES STAND IN BRITISH HACKING TRIAL**

LONDON: Rebekah Brooks, the former editor of the News of the World and the Sun tabloid, gave evidence for the first time in her phone-hacking trial after being cleared of one charge of paying for a photo of Prince William in a bikini. The 45-year-old former chief executive of News International, Rupert Murdoch’s British newspaper division, still faces four other charges in the long-running trial, including for conspiring to hack phones. After three and a half months of prosecution arguments, which included some sensational allegations about activities at Murdoch’s tabloids, lawyers for the seven defendants finally began their case.

Wearing a blue dress and white cardigan, her red hair curled around her head, Brooks was first in the witness box, where she described her early career in journalism and her work for the Sun and News of the World. Shortly before she began giving evidence, the judge declared that she had no case to answer in one charge against her, that of conspiring to commit misconduct in public office.

Brooks was accused of sanctioning a payment of £4,000 ($6,700, 4,900 euros) to a public official for a picture of Prince William dressed as a bikini-clad Bond girl at a party at Sandhurst, the British army’s officer training school. The image was never published but led to a story in The Sun in September 2006 with the headline “Willy in a Bikini” together with a mocked-up picture of the second-in-line to the throne in a green swimsuit.

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**Keep an open mind**

In his opening statement, Brooks’ defence lawyer Jonathan Laidlaw told the jury that it was “entirely understandable” if they had been confused by the evidence so far. He said Brooks was not on trial for being the editor of a tabloid newspaper, for working for Murdoch or for the policies and corporate views of his company, nor was she on trial for her political views or connections. “There are agendas as you can all see, being pursued elsewhere, so please just be careful and keep an open mind and stay focused upon what matters,” Laidlaw said.

“It is for you to see Mrs Brooks as she is—not as she has been described or spoken of elsewhere.” The lawyer said a key question was, did Brooks “know about and endorse a practice of phone hacking at the News of the World during her editorship from May 2000 to January 2003”. And “did she know that a public official was the source for a story at the Sun” or “did she instruct her husband Charlie and his personal assistant Cheryl Carter to cover up evidence of phone hacking or paying a public official” he asked.

Brooks is accused of conspiring to pay the official for the Sun story and for trying—with her husband, Carter and head of security Mark Hanna, who are also on trial—to cover up evidence of her alleged crimes. Also in the dock is Andy Coulson, Brooks’ one-time lover who replaced her as editor of the News of the World in 2003. Coulson, who later went to work as media chief for Prime Minister David Cameron, denies charges of phone hacking and paying officials for information. — AFP

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**COF up**

Moreover, Orban has been able to circumvent a rule limiting spending by parties by having a nominally independent organization called Civil Unity Forum (COF), which in fact is close to the government, do their posters, critics say. COF posters have been up for weeks, on floodlit billboards and advertising columns, hanging from buildings and offices and on the sides of trains, even though the campaign officially began only last Sunday.

Observers note, however, that the opposition has not done much to help itself, with the three main left-wing parties only agreeing an electoral pact last month and only this week launching its poster campaign. “Nobody is stopping the opposition from campaigning more vigorously via other channels,” argues Peter Kreko, an analyst with the Political Capital consultancy firm. He points out the opposition could still do more campaigning through letterboxes or on social media.—AFP

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**SURVEYS SHOW DISSENT**

In preparation for the autumn synod, the Vatican asked local churches to survey their faithful about teachings on same-sex marriage related to the family. Bishops in some countries, including Britain, opted not to publish their findings, but those published by German, Swiss and Japanese bishops showed that many people did not know Church teachings fully or rejected them as unrealistic and heartless.

They showed that most Catholics in those countries disputed bans on contraception, premarital or gay sex and criticized the rules regarding divorced Catholics. … także dla pragnienia...”

The one-time lover of Murdoch’s former chief executive, Rebekah Brooks, and former News International chief executive, and her husband Charlie Brooks (left) arrive at the Central Criminal Court yesterday. — AP