



Defending free expression and your right to know

The mass media have a critical role to play during “election periods” acting as the main sources of information for the public about the prevailing political environment, the preparations for holding the elections, and about the political contestants themselves. As the holding of harmonised elections on July 31st 2013 approaches, the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) will be carrying daily media updates on this momentous event until the day after the election results are announced. The daily media updates monitor the output of the mainstream domestic print and electronic media relating to coverage of election issues. This is aimed primarily at establishing whether the media is communicating the information the public needs to make informed decisions when they go and vote – and whether they can vote freely. For any views and comments, you can email us at monitors@mmpz.org.zw

The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe

Daily Election Report – No.15-2013

Monday, July 29th 2013

Electronic Media Report - Sunday, July 28, 2013

SUMMARY

Highlight of the day were the contrasting reports of the turnout at President Mugabe’s last rally at the National Sports Stadium in Harare today. While news reports from the public broadcaster and on the two local private stations reported on the “**multitudes**” who attended, the overseas-based radio station, Studio 7, reported that it was one of the poorest attendances the ZANU PF campaign had seen.

News of the arrest of the MDC-T’s deputy national chairman, Morgan Komichi, over the issue of “special vote” ballot papers allegedly found “dumped” in a dustbin, was also given contrasting treatment by the media. ZTV’s focus was on Senior Assistant Police Commissioner Charity Charamba saying he was likely to be prosecuted under the Electoral Act, while Studio 7

focused on the MDC-T's Nelson Chamisa alleging Komichi was a victim of harassment.

THE STATS...

Electronic media reported 26 election-related stories. Nineteen stories were on party campaigns and seven on electoral administration.

Of the 19 stories on political party campaigns, ZBC carried 14 reports (ZTV 10 and Sport FM four) while the remaining five were reported in the private electronic media.

Of the 10 party campaign stories aired on ZTV, eight promoted ZANU PF, one was on the MDC-T's rally in Chinhoyi the previous day, and one reported on Zimbabwe Development Party's decision to support ZANU PF's presidential candidate.

Spot FM only carried four promotional stories on ZANU PF campaigns and ignored other parties.

Distribution of the five reports on the private radio stations generally reflected balanced exposure, but not necessarily fair content: Star FM carried two reports; one each for both ZANU PF and the MDC-T, Studio 7 also ran a story on each of the two main political contestants' activities, while ZiFM carried just one story on a ZANU PF rally.

ZTV allocated 22 min 11secs to ZANU PF campaign rallies and accorded 4min 42 secs to MDC-T and 3min 25 secs to ZDP party activities.

PARTY CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

Reports conflict on final star rally turnout

IN these final hours of the 2013 election campaigns, ZANU PF continued to receive intense publicity from the national public broadcaster, ZBC, and received coverage in all the private radio stations' bulletins.

But while ZTV, Spot FM, Star FM and ZiFM all reported on the **“multitudes of supporters”** who turned up at the National Sports Stadium in Harare for ZANU PF's final rally before Election Day, Studio 7 gave a completely different perspective.

The station reported that attendance at the rally had one of the poorest turnouts of the entire ZANU PF campaign and that police prevented thousands of people at the stadium from leaving until after the presidential party had departed.

As has become the custom, ZTV and Spot FM dutifully interrupted its programming during the day to carry live coverage of the event, lasting three hours and 25 minutes, with Mugabe speaking for 10 minutes short of two hours of that time.

ZTV led its main evening news bulletin with Mugabe's comments at the stadium, accusing his political rival, MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai, of being ***"an irresponsible cry-baby"*** and warning him that he would be arrested if he attempted to unilaterally declare the results of Wednesday's national elections.

This was one of the seven stories ZTV carried in its news section featuring ZANU PF's campaign activities. But another one – of more than five minutes – popped up in the business section too, where Mugabe was reported telling his National Sports Stadium audience how indigenization would empower the people.

Other stories included a variety of ZANU PF officials and aspiring candidates being given time and sound-bites to accuse the MDC-T of poor service delivery, running corrupt councils, and for being a creation of the British.

ZANU PF's aspiring parliamentary candidate for Chinhoyi, Phillip Chiyangwa, was also quoted ridiculing his constituency rival from the MDC-T, telling ZTV's viewers in Shona that he was being ***"led by a fool"***.

Spot FM did not report the news on ZTV that the Zimbabwe Development Party's presidential candidate, Kisinoti Mukwazhe, had announced his decision to withdraw from the presidential race, promising his party's support for ZANU PF.

In other news, ZBC's bulletins suffocated reports of the MDC-T's Chibuku Stadium rally in Chitungwiza today. But Studio 7 and Star FM did not, although only Studio 7 quoted Tsvangirai describing Mugabe as ***"a puppet of the military"*** and reported him warning those who had abused the country's resources, especially the diamond sector, that they would ***"face the full wrath of the law"*** if he wins Wednesday's elections.

Star FM selectively covered the Chibuku rally, reporting that Tsvangirai had accused the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission of causing the arrest of its deputy national chairman, Morgan Komichi, and for allegedly coming up with new rules for the counting of ballots a few days before the harmonized elections.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Komichi arrest: Victim or offender?

All the electronic media reported the arrest of the MDC-T Deputy National chairman Morgan Komichi.

ZTV and Spot FM reported Komichi's arrest in the context of Senior Assistant Commissioner Charity Charamba dismissing allegations by the MDC-T's organising secretary, Nelson Chamisa, that the move was a clear case of harassment. ZTV quoted Charamba saying Komichi was "helping" the police with their investigations, and that he was likely to be charged under the Electoral Act for tampering with ballot papers without authority.

Studio 7 quoted MDC-T Chamisa blaming ZEC and ZANU PF, saying it was ZEC that has questions to answer, not Komichi. He added that ZANU PF "***undermines the will of the people***" by "***attempting to rig the elections***".

ZTV also announced the arrival of the Leader of the African Union Observer Team, Former Nigerian President, Olusegun Obasanjo who commended the peaceful environment prevailing around the country.

Political advertising

Due to a power cut, MMPZ was unable to monitor the evening prime-time advertising content on ZTV. However, ZBC's Spot FM aired just two ZANU PF promotional songs, one lasting 5minutes 40secs.

Star FM alternated MDC-T and ZANU PF advertising at regular intervals.

ZiFM carried no political advertising from any of the contesting parties.

Current affairs programmes

Only ZTV carried a current affairs programme today:

Zvavanhu (About people) – This 30-minute programme featured Isheunesu Mupeperekwi and Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe chairman, Tafataona Mahoso, as panellists discussing in the vernacular Shona language "***What do white people want in Africa and in particular Zimbabwe?***" This programme allowed the panellists a platform to spew xenophobic, racist rhetoric that promoted ZANU PF's mantra warning that Zimbabwe needs to guard its sovereignty and independence against white imperialist machinations.

Print Media report for Monday, July 29th , 2013

SUMMARY

As election fever approaches its climax, the press reflected the tension-filled atmosphere while the country completes its preparations for national elections on Wednesday.

The arrest of MDC-T's national deputy chairman Morgan Komichi made the headlines in all the papers. *The Herald* reported he had been arrested for allegedly misrepresenting to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission that he had "**picked up**" from a dustbin a sealed envelope with the special vote. The press gave contrasting views on the motive of the arrest, which was justified in the state-run *Herald* and condemned in the private dailies, *NewsDay* and the *Daily News*.

The Herald dismissed alleged plots of rigging amplified by the private press through an unsubstantiated report alleging MDC-T was working with the European Union and United States to discredit the upcoming polls.

Other issues that were also carried by the papers included the main parties' political activities. *The Herald* and *Daily News* maintained their partisan nature.

THE STATS...

The print media carried 49 election-related reports.

Of these, 30 (61%) appeared in the privately owned press, the *Daily News* and *NewsDay*. The remaining 19 (39%) were captured in *The Herald*.

Of the 49 reports, 29 (59%) were on political party activities, while 15 (31%) were on the administration of the elections. *Daily News* reported a single media violation in which ZBC refused to flight MDC-T's campaign adverts.

There were 22 election-related advertisements today. The private media carried 19 of them; The *Daily News* had 13 while *NewsDay* carried six. Of these seven were political adverts; both the private papers also carried two adverts each on ZANU PF while the additional three on MDC-T appeared in the *Daily News*. All the papers carried the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's list of polling stations supplement, which first appeared in the private weekly, *The Standard*, yesterday, while civic groups posted the remaining adverts.

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

Media bias taints reports

In their coverage of political party activities today, *The Herald* and *Daily News* failed to mask their bias, while *NewsDay*'s coverage was neutral. In *The Herald*'s 11 reports on party activities, seven were positive reports on ZANU PF's rallies conducted around the country.

Any shadow of doubt of where *The Herald*'s allegiance lies was cast out in the report titled, **'Vote for development, says Zimpapers boss'**. Zimpapers' chief executive officer Justin Mutasa was quoted at a ZANU PF rally in Mutasa saying, **"Even those in MDC-T should see value in joining ZANU PF"**.

The Herald's bias was further exposed in the papers' reports which repeated ZANU PF's campaign moniker to "indigenise, empower, develop and create employment" for example one feature report was entitled **'Indigenisation, empowerment pay off for Shurugwi'**.

The state-run daily also acted as ZANU PF's launch pad for attacks against MDC-T; the paper's front page was plastered with reports admonishing the MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai's utterances at the Domboshawa show grounds that he would not wait for ZEC to announce the results. Mugabe was quoted saying, **"I can tell you in advance that if you breach the rules and you become a law-breaker, the law-breakers are arrested and the police will arrest you as a law-breaker"**.

Of the remaining four reports carried by *The Herald* on MDC-T activities two were neutral, such as the announcement by chief police spokesperson Charity Charamba that the police had cleared an MDC-T crossover rally, near the Rainbow Towers. And another one reported Tsvangirai at a rally at Chibuku Stadium in Chitungwiza saying ZEC was supposed to investigate a special ballot discovered in a dustbin.

On the other hand, the *Daily News* gave the MDC-T a platform to respond to Mugabe's verbal attack. While Mugabe calls Tsvangirai a **"cry-baby"** Tsvangirai responds in the *Daily News* saying, **"Mugabe calls me a cry baby, I'm not a cry baby, Mai Makone, I don't have a handiende (I will not go) attitude"**. The paper also carried six negative reports on ZANU PF while all three of its reports on MDC-T were positive.

The *Daily News* gave prominence to a survey by an American group who tipped MDC-T to win in the upcoming polls. Their research showed that, **"At 61 percent, MDC-T shows it has potential support from across the political spectrum with the exception of hardcore Mugabe voters"**. This revelation only appeared in the *Daily News*.

NewsDay carried fair and balanced reports on the parties' activities ahead of the watershed elections this Wednesday. For example, the paper carried six reports of which three were ZANU PF; two were about the MDC-T and one on the MDC-N.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Komichi in the dock

Although all the papers did report Komichi's arrest, while *The Herald* viewed Komichi as a suspect, the private press portrayed him as a victim. *The Herald* makes uncorroborated claims that, ***“Mr Komichi is also accused of marking the ballot papers in favour of his party...”*** Police Commissioner Charity Charamba said even though he is assisting police with investigations, he will become the ***“prime suspect”*** if he did not disclose the identity of his source.

In the private press, MDC-T officials were surprised Komichi was being persecuted for carrying out his duty as the party's liaison with ZEC. They argued that he was well within his rights to expose the election irregularity. MDC-T's national organising secretary was quoted in *The Daily News* saying, ***“We believe that it is not Senator Komichi but Zec which has questions to answer”***.

In another development, *The Herald* claimed to have ***“unearthed evidence”*** that European Union, Britain and United States were funding NGOs, such as ZESN and Crisis Coalition's efforts to discredit the forthcoming general elections. The paper noted that the United States Department of State was making, ***“huge deposits into quasi-political groups masquerading as NGOs to prop up the MDC campaign”***.

The paper quoted a letter written by Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office Jameson Timba on behalf of Tsvangirai as evidence of the alleged plot even though the quoted section did not reveal that the funds were meant to discredit the elections but rather to boost the MDC-T's campaign.

The report did not present a credible source to substantiate the claims. Its targeted attack of Zimbabwe Elections Support Network (ZESN) just two days before elections raises suspicion that the report was meant to discredit the country's independent civic electoral watchdog and other NGOs observing the upcoming elections.

MEDIA ISSUES

The *Daily News* reported that state broadcaster, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) refused to flight two MDC-T advertisements in which Tsvangirai and his wife call on the people to vote for the party in the general elections.

For statistical evidence of the media's coverage of political party campaigns, please feel free to contact us or view MMPZ's daily reports on the media's coverage of the election process on our website <http://www.mmpz.org/>

The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) was founded to promote freedom of expression and responsible journalism in Zimbabwe.

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