



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.6-2013

Saturday, July 20th 2013

Electronic media report for Friday, July 19th 2013

SUMMARY

HIGHLIGHTS in the electronic media today included reports that the Constitutional Court had dismissed an MDC-T application querying the figures of police officers who voted in the special early ballot that ended on July 15th. News that verification and tallying of the Special Vote was underway in the presence of representatives of political parties, polling agents and observers also made the news bulletins on ZTV and SW Radio Africa. The private radio station also reported that South African President, Jacob Zuma, the SADC facilitator assigned to ensure a free and fair election in Zimbabwe, would host a SADC Troika meeting on Saturday (tomorrow) to discuss Zimbabwe’s election preparations.

Another new development was on media issues, reporting the launch of an independent television station in Johannesburg on Friday by a group of Zimbabweans.

The electronic media focused mainly on party campaigns across the country with ZANU PF continuing to enjoy massive live coverage of its campaign rallies on ZBC.

THE STATS

THE electronic media carried a total of 37 election-related stories. [Party campaigns 24, administrative issues of the elections nine, and two apiece on human rights and other election-related matters].

Of the 37 reports, the public broadcaster, ZBC, aired 21 election-related stories, (ZTV 17 and Spot FM five)

The private radio stations carried 16 stories. [ZiFM four, Star FM two, Studio 7 and SWRA five apiece].

There were no stories on fresh incidents of political violence in the bulletins of all the electronic media.

ZTV allocated 25 minutes 56 seconds to ZANU-PF campaign activities in its main evening news bulletin, while allocating only 3 minutes 50 seconds to MDC-T activity.

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

ZBC denies live coverage to ZANU PF's rivals

The electronic media carried 24 reports on political party activities. These gave prominence to campaign messages by prominent party officials such as President Mugabe, Vice-President Joyce Mujuru, MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai and MDC-N leader Welshman Ncube.

Of the 24 campaign reports in the electronic media, 17 appeared on the national broadcaster, ZBC, (ZTV 13 and Spot FM four), while the private radio stations broadcast the remaining seven [Studio 7 three, ZiFM & Star FM two each].

ZBC continued according ZANU PF massive live coverage of its rallies in various parts of the country while denying ZANU PF's rivals the same service. President Mugabe was covered live on Friday addressing a rally at Somhlolo Stadium in Lupane (ZTV & Spot FM). This and other rallies received coverage running for more than four hours (normally from 12 pm-4pm).

In Lupane, President Mugabe castigated tribal politics and denounced ZAPU leader Dumiso Dabengwa and the MDC-N leader, Welshman Ncube. He also 'expressed concern over the number of people who failed to vote during the Special Vote exercise (ZTV and Spot FM 8pm).

Other ZANU PF rallies that received wide coverage on ZBC include Vice-President Joice Mujuru's rallies in Muzarabani and Mvurwi in Mashonaland Central with ZTV carrying a headline ***'Mujuru campaign trail blaze in Mash Central'***.

According to Spot FM (8pm) Mujuru also addressed four rallies in Mashonaland East and gave a roundup of the party's other rallies held in various parts of the country including in Bulawayo, Chirumanzu and Magogi in Makonde district.

ZBC's only report on the MDC-T was its rally in Vungu in which ZTV tried to give the impression that Tsvangirai was dependent on foreign support by selectively quoting him saying ***"If you are a father how can you befriend someone without anything, because where would you go in times of need?"***

The public broadcaster censored all news of the MDC-T's other rallies in Mberengwa and other parts of the Midlands

ZBC's continued and heavily biased coverage in favour of ZANU PF and its presidential candidate, Robert Mugabe, violates local and international regulations on media coverage of elections. For example, Zimbabwe's Electoral Act [Chapter 2:13] Part XXIB section 160J (a) on the conduct of news media during an election period states that *"all political parties and candidates are treated equitably in their news media, in regard to the extent, timing and prominence of the coverage accorded to them,"*.

The private media on the other hand, tried to report on the campaign activities of all parties. For example, Studio 7 and ZiFM carried campaign reports on ZANU PF, MDC-T and MDC-N. Although their coverage appeared limited in terms of numbers, their treatment of news on these parties' activities was neutral and fair

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

ZBC censors news of SADC meeting

The electronic media carried nine reports on election administration. [ZTV four SW Radio Africa four, while Spot FM carried one.]

They gave prominence to the Constitutional Court's dismissal of an MDC-T application querying the numbers of police officers who were allowed to vote in the special early voting exercise. ZTV and SW Radio Africa reported that the verification and tallying of ballot papers from the Special Vote was underway with the participation of representatives from political parties, polling agents and observers.

SW Radio Africa also reported MDC-T secretary-general, Tendai Biti, claiming that Registrar-General, Tobaiwa Mudede has created three to four different voters roll databases for the purposes of rigging the upcoming elections. Biti claimed that an Israeli company, Nikuv was helping Mudede's office to manipulate the voters' roll.

The same radio station reported that South African President, Jacob Zuma, SADC's facilitator to Zimbabwe, would host a SADC Troika meeting on Saturday to discuss Zimbabwe's election preparations.

This report was censored on ZBC, which instead focused on a communiqué issued by the African Union declaring that its observers had reported that conditions so far were conducive to the holding of a credible election.

The state broadcaster highlighted that the AU commended the calm atmosphere in Zimbabwe and further congratulated Zimbabwe on the successful referendum. (ZTV and Spot FM)

POLITICAL ADVERTISING

ZBC and the two private radio stations Star FM & ZiFM continued to broadcast the MDC-T advert titled, ***It's time for more***. The electronic media carried 13 adverts on both ZANU PF and MDC-T [ZBC: ZANU PF five & MDC-T four]. The private radio stations, Star FM & ZiFM carried four, two each for both ZANU PF and MDC-T.

There is also continued proliferation of negative political advertisements against the MDC-T on ZBC. The sponsors were unidentified. These adverts are also not clearly identified as advertising material as specified by the Electoral (Amendment) Act regulations section 160H (1) (c).

CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING

THE electronic media broadcast five current affairs programmes that debated election-related issues, three of them appeared on ZTV and the remaining two on Star FM.

ZTV broadcast *the Viewpoint* focusing on the election period and spoke to aspiring ZANU-PF youths vying for parliamentary elections, to find their views on the importance of election time. ZANU-PF's aspiring MP for Harare West, Varaidzo Mupunga was accessed for comment.

The *Vox-pop* structured programme, spoke to various people in Chegutu whose voices represented both the MDC formations and ZANU PF.

Another programme, ***Melting Pot***, hosted by Oscar Pambuka focused on various election manifestos and campaigns from the contesting parties. The programme featured Tafadzwa Musarara of ZANU-PF and Charles Mangongera of the MDC-T.

ZTV also aired ***The Manifesto***, a recent current affairs slot whose guests so far have comprised mainly leaders from lesser-known political parties.

The leaders are given the platform to highlight their party manifesto in view of the forthcoming harmonized elections. Today's programme brought in Dr. Lindani Dube, technical adviser of the Alliance Khumbul' Ekhaya to discuss his party's manifesto.

Star FM carried two current Affairs programmes, one entitled ***Election 2013***, which featured aspiring MDC-N candidate for Sunningdale, Matsveru Musvevereki and ZANU PF aspirant Betty Kaseke for Kuwadzana, explaining their election prospects and party manifestos.

MEDIA ISSUES

Studio 7 reported that a group of Zimbabweans had launched an independent television station, 1st TV on Friday. However it also reported President Mugabe's spokesman, George Charamba, as saying that Zimbabwe would approach South Africa's President Jacob Zuma to ask him to stop the station using South African signal carriers to broadcast its signal into Zimbabwe.

Print Media report for Saturday, July 20th, 2013

SUMMARY

The contentious issue today was the aftermath of the African Union's 385th meeting of the Peace and Security Council meeting in Addis Ababa. The state-controlled *Herald* had a field day dedicating two celebratory reports gloating over the continental bloc's endorsement of Zimbabwe's July 31 polls.

Also of note was Chief Justice George Chiweshe's dismissal of MDC-T's plea for the court to review the number of uniformed forces who voted under the special vote exercise. Both the public and private press covered the story in which the judge reserved reasons for the judgement.

The Herald and *NewsDay* announced ZEC's opening and sorting of the special ballots while the *Daily News* only published a picture of the event.

THE STATS

The print media carried 34 stories on the July 31st general elections.

Of these, 22 (65%) appeared in the privately owned press, *The Daily News and NewsDay*. The remaining 12 (35%) were captured in *The Herald*.

Of the 34 reports, 17 (50%) were on party political campaigns, while 15 (44%) were on the administration of the elections.

Only the private newspapers carried election advertisements; *The Daily News* featured a running advertisement sponsored by Women's Trust, which encourages women to vote for women. *NewsDay* carried an MDC-T campaign advert.

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

Media polarised on party campaigns

The print media carried 17 stories on political party campaign activities focusing mainly on ZANU PF and MDC-T. Of these, 11 (65%) appeared in the private press; *Daily News* (three) and *NewsDay* (eight). *The Herald* carried the remaining six. Of *The Herald's* six stories four were positive ZANU PF campaign "news", while the remaining two were negative articles on the MDC-T leadership, including a distorted report on MDC-T leader, Morgan Tsvangirai's rallies in Zvishavane.

The media landscape continues to be polarised with the state newspaper continuously singing in ZANU PF's corner while attacking the party's primary opposition, the MDC-T.

In its regular Saturday commentary, *The Other Side*, *Herald* columnist Nathaniel Manheru attacks the character of MDC-T secretary-general Tendai Biti who also doubles as finance minister. Criticizing Biti for his alleged mismanagement of the country's finances, among other issues, Manheru says; ***"I am not sure that when measured against the dissembling village witch Tendai fares any better. My suspicion is he fares worse."***

The Herald continued to report favourably on ZANU PF's fortunes, using a story today that international news agency Reuters had tipped the party to win the upcoming elections and connected it to earlier surveys making a similar prediction.

Sections of the private media were not much better today as they were also biased against ZANU PF. For example, the *Daily News* anchored its lead story, 'Mugabe runs out of steam...turns rallies into history lectures', is based on the paper's own impressions of Mugabe's rallies. These sentiments are recurrent in the *Daily News*, which carried seven negative reports (including columnists' opinions) on ZANU PF today. Notably, the *Daily News* was again slow to report on the political parties' campaign stories, this time missing out on the MDC-T's Zvishavane rally. *NewsDay's* two reports on the MDC-T (including the Zvishavane rally) were both positive.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

State Media cheers AU election endorsement

The Herald carried six stories on the administration of the July 31 elections. The paper revelled in the outcome of the AU Peace and Security Council meeting in Addis Ababa using the news that the AU had endorsed the preparations for the July 31 poll as its lead story.

Strangely, *NewsDay* also covered the AU verdict, but buried it at the end of its story on poll funding. The *Daily News* didn't carry this important news at all.

The Herald quoted AU commissioner for political affairs, Dr Aisha Abdullahi saying: ***“The environment in Zimbabwe so far reassures us that the conditions are good for the election to be held on July 31...The Peace and Security Council has noted the levels of preparation for the election and confirmed that the funding gap has been filled”.***

But instead of focusing on the outcome and details of the communiqué, the paper seized the opportunity to gloat about the endorsement, simultaneously attacking senior member of the South African mediation team, Lindiwe Zulu, over her reservations on Zimbabwe's state of readiness for elections. The paper, which dedicated three stories on the issue, used some of ZANU PF's staunchest sympathisers to attack Zulu.

ZANU PF politburo member Jonathan Moyo said; ***“MDC-T sympathisers and supporters in President Zuma's facilitation team are now coming out of their closets to openly show their support for the MDC-T by foolishly claiming that the situation on the ground is not looking good”.***

In its editorial comment headlined, *“Once again rein in your poodle Mr President”*, *The Herald* denigrated Zulu and cast doubt on South Africa's integrity as a GPA facilitator. This was reinforced in another “news” story entitled, *‘Hands Off Zim Affairs, Zulu Told’* where political analyst, Bowden Mbanje is quoted saying, ***“If Zuma fails to warn her (Zulu) then it means he is part and parcel of the MDC-T agenda but one reality on the ground is Zimbabwe is heading for elections without fail in a few days’ time. They are just wasting their time,”***

In another development, all the papers announced that Chief Justice George Chiweshe had dismissed the Special vote application by the MDC-T to review the number of police officers who were supposed to vote during the special poll. However, reasons for the decision were not given.

The Herald and *NewsDay* reported on the opening and sorting of the special vote ballots while the *Daily News* had a photograph, which illustrated the proceedings of the event.

MEDIA ISSUES

NewsDay responded to a report in *The Herald* titled; *“Police dismiss MDC-T political violence claims”*, in which police spokesperson Charity Charamba criticizes the paper for reporting that seven people were attacked by ZANU PF supporters in Chitungwiza, when official police reports only registered four.

The paper expressed suspicion as to why Charamba was exerting more energy in criticizing the paper instead of investigating the crime.

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