



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.4 2013
Thursday, July 18th 2013**

Electronic media report for Wednesday, July 17th 2013

SUMMARY

All the electronic media missed the news that uniformed forces and civil servants who failed to cast their vote in the just-ended special early voting exercise conducted by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission will not legally be entitled to get a second chance to do so in the July 31 elections. Only *NewsDay* the next morning (18/7 see below) reported this citing section 81B: 2 of the Electoral Law. The electronic media focused mainly on party campaigns going on nationwide and the chaotic nature of the special voting process.

THE STATS

THE electronic media carried a total of 29 election-related stories. [Party campaigns 18, administrative issues of the elections eight and three reports on other election related matters].

Of the 29 reports, the public broadcaster, ZBC, had 13 election-related stories, (ZTV nine and Spot FM four)

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

There were no stories on political violence in the bulletins of both the public and privately owned electronic media.

ZTV allocated 13 minutes 59 seconds to ZANU-PF campaign activities in its evening main news bulletin, while it only allocated only 2 minutes 17 seconds to MDC-T activity.

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

ZBC continues its loyalty to ZANU PF

The electronic media carried 18 reports on political party activities where prominent party officials, such as President Mugabe, the First Lady Grace Mugabe, Vice-President Joyce Mujuru, ZAPU President Dumiso Dabengwa and MDC-N spokesman Nhlanhla Dube were quoted urging their supporters to vote for their respective parties ahead of the harmonised elections.

Of the 18 campaign activity reports, nine appeared on the national broadcaster, (ZTV 5 and Spot FM 4.)

The private radio stations broadcast the remaining nine reports.[ZiFM three, Star FM two, Studio 7 and SW Radio Africa recorded two each]

ZTV's blatantly partisan coverage of ZANU PF was evident in the time it allocated to the party's activities compared with the other main political parties (see STATS above).

The state broadcaster reported five ZANU-PF rallies held across the country where officials urged their audiences to vote for ZANU-PF, denounced the West for trying to exploit Zimbabwe's wealth of natural resources, and criticised Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai for promoting homosexuality.

ZTV quoted Grace Mugabe addressing a rally at Madamombe Business Center in Chikomba West praising Mugabe for being "*principled*" and having "*the people at heart*".

The station reported that the First Lady donated foodstuffs to the people without viewing this as vote-buying.

King Letsie III of Lesotho also praised Mugabe, who was attending the king's birthday celebrations saying, ***“he was touched by the sacrifice”*** made by President Mugabe ***“to leave all that (campaigning) behind just for one day in order to celebrate with us.”***

One of ZTV's stories on ZANU PF campaign rallies was a 3-minute-and-07-second repeat of the Chitungwiza rally held on Tuesday July 16 and addressed by Mugabe where he was quoted criticising the West for their regime-change agenda, and NGOs for giving ***“minimal assistance”*** to the country.

The other one was a follow-up on the rally where ZANU PF official Amos Midzi castigated the private press for irresponsible journalism. He accused them of reporting falsely about the death of Regina Matawu in a stampede at Mugabe's rally in Chitungwiza last Tuesday.

ZBC censored activities of other political parties. For example, the broadcaster ignored the MDC-T rally held in Gokwe. It only and carried one court case on the MDC-T seeking to nullify the special vote citing irregularities in the voting process.

Only the privately owned radio stations covered other political parties, such as the MDC-T, the smaller MDC formation and ZAPU.

Studio 7 reported disputes in the MDC-T over the fielding of two parliamentary candidates in the same constituency.

ZiFM quoted MDC-N spokesman Nhanhla Dube calling for a free, fair and credible election.

Studio 7 carried a story on ZAPU presidential candidate, Dumiso Dabengwa.

ZiFM (17/7) quoted President Mugabe in a rally at Chibuku stadium in Chitungwiza accusing Tendai Biti of not channelling \$500 million provided by the IMF to revive distressed companies.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Aftermath of chaotic ‘early vote’ explored

The electronic media continued to report the aftermath of the chaos that characterised the special voting process that was supposed to have closed at midnight on Monday.

The media carried eight reports. [ZTV, Studio 7 & ZiFM carried two reports each. Star FM & SW Radio Africa one each.]

The media quoted ZEC officials saying those who failed to exercise their special vote would get another chance to do so on July 31 when harmonised elections are

due to be held.

However, these media did not pick up on the fact that according to the Electoral (Amendment) Act section 81B: 2 **“a voter who has been authorised to cast a special vote shall not be entitled to vote in any other manner than by casting a special vote in terms of this part.”** This was only reported the next morning (Thursday) in *NewsDay*’s lead story (see report below).

The media merely quoted ZEC officials saying civil servants would be allowed to vote on July 31 without referring to the law.

ZTV’s two reports on the administration of the election were on the special vote.

It reported the MDC-T court case seeking to nullify the special vote and ZEC’s announcement that ballot boxes of the special vote would be opened in public this Friday (tomorrow).

Meanwhile, the private radio stations quoted political parties, civic society and the international community expressing concern over the country’s preparedness to hold the forthcoming elections citing the irregularities experienced in the special voting process.

ZiFM reported that the United States was concerned by the lack of transparency in the preparations for the election on July 31.

Star FM and Studio 7 reported MDC-T Secretary-General Tendai Biti denying, at a Press briefing earlier reports that his party had written to the AU seeking the postponement of the July 31 election as alleged by President Mugabe at Rudhaka Stadium rally in Marondera.

SW Radio Africa and Studio 7 reported a High Court ruling in which the Research and Advocacy Unit was barred from launching its audit of the Zimbabwe voters’ roll.

POLITICAL ADVERTISING

ZTV, Spot FM, Star FM & ZiFM continued to broadcast the MDC-T advert titled, ***It’s time for more.***

ZTV also continued to screen political advertisements that campaigned against the MDC-T whose 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).

ZTV carried a new unidentified advertisement, which criticises the MDC-T for calling for sanctions against the country.

The advert ends with one of the unidentified speakers saying, ***“I really doubt if anyone would vote for MDC”.***

ZTV, Spot FM, Star FM & ZiFM aired the official ZANU-PF campaign advertisements which urged Zimbabweans to attend the ZANU-PF Star Rally scheduled for Chinhoyi tomorrow (Thursday July 18).

The second ZANU-PF advert was a 3-minute animated advert titled: *Indigenisation Explained*.

Current affairs Programmes

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

ZTV broadcast ***The Manifesto***: that featured Douglas Mwonzora, Secretary for Information and Publicity in the MDC-T discussing his party's manifesto.

ZiFM had one current affairs programme, ***The Ballot Box*** that featured David Parirenyatwa, Former Health minister and MP for Murehwa North discussing the ZANU-PF manifesto and what it intends to deliver to the people of Zimbabwe.

Star FM aired its regular ***The Outlook*** programme, featuring ZEC Commissioner Dr Petty Makoni discussing the special voting exercise and the upcoming general election voting day.

Print media report for Thursday, July 18th, 2013

SUMMARY

Only *NewsDay* provided an analysis of the Electoral law in reference to the fate of the uniformed forces and civil servants who were unable to vote in the just-ended early special voting exercise conducted by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC). The state-run *Herald* was preoccupied with blaming the MDC-T for the chaos that marred the exercise, while *NewsDay* examined the legal implications, quoting experts citing the Electoral Law that excludes those included in the early voting exercise from having a second chance.

The Herald quoted ZANU PF politburo member Jonathan Moyo responding to MDC-T claims that the military had taken over the exercise to sabotage it, describing the party as “**overgrown babies**” who had been spoiled by their Western “masters”.

The trading of accusations and the chaotic conclusion to the special voting exercise were the highlights of the news in the Press.

Only *NewsDay* and the *Daily News* carried a press statement in the form of an advertisement from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) that included an apology **“to the members of the disciplined forces...to political parties and the nation at large”** for the chaotic nature of its early special voting exercise. But it also stated that those who failed to cast their vote during the special voting process would be able to do so on July 31 together with everyone else. This last statement appeared to conflict with *NewsDay*’s lead story, ‘*Cops, Soldiers won’t vote*’.

THE STATS

THE print media carried 28 reports on the harmonized elections, scheduled for July 31. Of these, 11 (39%) were contained in the state-owned daily, *The Herald*.

The remaining 17 appeared in the private newspapers, *NewsDay* and *The Daily News*. Fourteen (50%) were on the administration of the elections, while the remaining 13 were on party political campaigns. Six of the 13 reports on party political campaigns (43%) appeared in *The Herald*, while the *Daily News* carried five and *NewsDay* three.

NewsDay carried one report on politically motivated violence.

The same paper also carried a single advertisement for the MDC-T, as did the *Daily News*.

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

State-run Herald maintains its ZANU PF bias

ZANU PF and their party president, Robert Mugabe, continued to enjoy exclusively positive coverage in the state-run daily, *The Herald*. Five of its six stories focused on ZANU PF and its leader, while the other one was a negative report on MDC-T.

All five stories on ZANU PF quoted officials praising the party’s manifesto and Mugabe, and insisting the party was far more popular than the MDC-T. *The Herald* quoted first lady Grace Mugabe describing her husband as a **“God fearing”** and **“selfless leader”**.

Although they seemingly covered MDC-T activities, this was exclusively negative. For instance, instead of giving fair details of Tsvangirai’s speech at his Gokwe rally, the paper seized the opportunity to accuse Tsvangirai of making an **“incredible somersault”** when he stated that his party was ready for the July 31 election when up until now he had been arguing for its postponement. The unprofessional editorial comment in the intro of the news story claimed his statement **“will shock even his handlers from Western countries”**.

On the other hand, the private papers favoured the MDC-T in their reports, ignoring President Mugabe's comments during his visit to Lesotho. Both *NewsDay* and the *Daily News* reported the Gokwe rally and gave a detailed account of what transpired, while *NewsDay* carried an interview with MDC-N senatorial candidate David Coltart.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Media blame-game continues

The Herald continued to blame the MDC-T for the chaotic special voting exercise, which was supposed to end at midnight on Monday, basing its claims on unsubstantiated allegations.

For example, in an unusual front-page comment, it claimed that ZEC's failure to run the ballot successfully was due to the MDC formations' deliberate attempts to **"frustrate the special vote to abet their selfish campaign for poll postponement..."**

The paper has ignored the MDC formations' claims (and those from civil society) that the hurried election declaration had not given ZEC enough time to run all the pre-election processes successfully before Voting Day. And it resorted to using the unsubstantiated facts in its news story of the previous day to reinforce its allegation that **"the MDC formations went on to connive with some elements in ZEC...to sabotage the chain of command by issuing conflicting statements that fomented confusion in the deployment of ballots and the conduct of the vote."**

These specious claims have attempted to deflect the debate away from the real question about whether ZEC is ready to oversee the much larger harmonized national elections in a few days' time.

The Herald also blamed Finance Minister Tendai Biti for refusing to provide sufficient funds from the International Monetary Fund's Special Drawing Rights facility. The paper's lead news story again resorted to editorial comment that the **"MDC T has been on a spirited campaign to frustrate the holding of elections on July 31"** and then turned to its favourite "analyst", ZANU PF politburo member Jonathan Moyo, to give his own opinion to support the paper's claim: **"In their desperate but ill-fated quest to stampede SADC and the AU to violate its own and the UN charter while abusing the courts and undermining the rule of law in Zimbabwe, the MDC formations are now behaving like overgrown babies..."**

Only *NewsDay* reported in its lead story that those who were authorized to vote in the special early voting exercise would not get a second chance on Election Day, contrary to ZEC's statement. The paper quoted section 81B:2 of the Electoral Law which states that: **"A voter who has been authorized to cast a special vote shall not be entitled to vote in any other manner than by casting a special vote..."** The paper also accessed expert legal opinion to corroborate this fact.

A number of stories in *The Herald* gave the impression that preparations for the elections were progressing well despite the problems experienced during the special early voting exercise, and quoted President Mugabe “confirming” this: “...**the processes leading to our harmonised elections...are moving smoothly in the full glare of SADC and African Union observers and those from other well-meaning countries.**”

But *NewsDay* reported otherwise and accessed comment from election watchdog NGOs, ZESN and the Elections Resources Centre calling for ZEC to postpone national elections to avert the likelihood of chaos and instability arising from inadequate preparation as witnessed in the special voting process. A US State Department spokesperson was also quoted expressing concern over “**the lack of transparency in electoral preparedness...**”

Only *the Daily News* reported that in response to government’s decision to bar an EU election observer mission, the Europeans had threatened to withhold technical support to ZEC. It quoted the head of the EU delegation, Aldo Dell’ Ariccia saying “**if this mission is not allowed to the country, it will not be possible for the EU to provide some of our support to ZEC...**”

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Only *NewsDay* reported one case of political violence; in Chitungwiza, where seven MDC-T activists were attacked and injured by suspected ZANU PF supporters.

MEDIA NEWS

NewsDay also reported the imminent arrival of a new television broadcasting station, 1st TV, that is planning to broadcast into the country from tomorrow (Friday) using satellite technology on the free-to-air Wiztech platform that formerly hosted the South African Broadcasting Corporation’s stations. The paper quoted 1st TV’s senior presenter/producer, Temba Hove, promising its viewers “**impartial, factual news to the people of Zimbabwe...**”

MMPZ welcomes news of the birth of this alternative source of information that will give the nation’s many Wiztech owners an important choice of where they can access news about Zimbabwe.

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