



**Media provided only limited information about the 1 April by-elections. While the repressive media legislation has chilling effect on the freedom of expression, most of the media remain favourable towards new ruling powers.**

Yangon, 26 June 2017 - The [report](#) is presented by the Myanmar Institute for Democracy (MID) and Slovak-based watch-dog MEMO 98. The monitoring is a part of the project supported by the National Endowment for Democracy. The overall objective of this initiative is to keep the public informed about the conduct of media, in particular through a comprehensive analysis of the tendencies of media reporting and to facilitate discussion about the quality of media reporting.

During the third monitoring period (the previous reports can be found at [memo98.sk](#)) from 18 February-31 March 2017 the media provided only limited information about contestants competing in by-elections. As a result, it was rather difficult for the voters to form a more objective view of the campaign and to make an informed choice at the ballot box.

At the same time, most of the media, in particular the state-funded broadcasters dedicated the bulk of their coverage to the activities of authorities. The state broadcasters continued to offer biased coverage promoting the government and the ruling NLD. This advantage of incumbency gave the party apparent leverage over their opponents who did not hold any official positions.

*“Traditionally, the main broadcasters enjoy high level of trust and popularity. In this respect, the authorities should move ahead with the plans to transform State broadcasters into a genuinely independent public service media that would not serve any partisan interest. Conversely, it should develop fair and impartial editorial line, essential for development of a healthy democratic society”,* said Maw Zin, MID’s Board member.

Positively, despite the continued general lack of investigative approach, the number of critical and independent opinions on the performance of the authorities has been increasing. While such editorial policy still appears to be a rather irregular than a part of a more systemic editorial stance, it shows a desired direction for a more comprehensive and critical political reporting.

Yet, the country’s repressive legislation and its regular implementation, in particular Section 66 (d) of the Telecommunications Act that carries potential charge of a three-year prison raises profound concern amongst journalist community. Numerous cases contributed to a chilling atmosphere concerning the exercise of the freedom of expression, the trend at odds with democratic principles.

*“In a pluralistic society like Myanmar enjoys, there should be a certain degree of tolerance with regard to provocative speech especially affecting authorities or elected officials. As the international practice suggests, even if offensive, shocking or disturbing, such expressions should not be inhibited or sanctioned to suppress criticism of the government or its institutions”,* said Ivan Godársky from MEMO 98.

Another phase of the project, with the support of NED, will continue throughout 2018.