

New Zimbabwe daily debuts, in easing of media rules

HARARE: A new independent daily in Zimbabwe published its first issue on Friday (4 June 2010), in the most concrete sign yet of the government's easing of harsh media restrictions.

The *News Day* tabloid becomes the first private daily in Zimbabwe since 2003, when the government banned *The Daily News*, a popular newspaper renowned for its willingness to take on the government of President Robert Mugabe.

The inaugural issue led with a story about the central bank planning to retrench some 3000 employees.

In an editorial, the newspaper said the publication gives the country an opportunity for the citizens to talk to each other in an open and honest way.

"In the 30 years of our independence, media have been abused to relay hate and divisiveness and to create personality cult," the editorial said.

"*News Day* shall endeavour to report the news for Zimbabweans whose collective voice has systematically drowned out the din of slogans and abhorrent propaganda," the paper said.

Last month, Zimbabwe's newly created media commission granted licenses to allow four new private dailies.

One license went to Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe, which published the *The Daily News*.

That paper survived bombings of its premises and arrests of its journalists until authorities finally shut it down in September 2003.

Media reforms are part of the power-sharing agreement between Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and Mugabe, who has been in power for over 30 years.

Tsvangirai has vowed to abolish the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which bans foreign journalists from working permanently in the country.

The 2002 act forced media organisations and journalists to register with a government body. This resulted in several newspapers being closed down and foreign correspondents being deported.

In April, the commission slashed its registration fees for media organisations and journalists, making it easier for them to operate.

Source: AFP

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