

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF 24X7 NATIONAL AND BENGALI NEWS CHANNELS' COVERAGE OF NORTH-EAST INDIA

by

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Abstract

North-East India refers to a vast region of 2,62,230 square km which consists with eight states - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. Natural resource-rich North-Eastern part of India is highly divergent in ethnicity, culture and linguistics. West Bengal shares its border with two North-Eastern states such as Assam and Sikkim. A significant Bengali speaking population lived in Tripura and Assam. Barak valley of Assam witnessed the strong fight for Bengali language in 1961. Bengali is also the Official language of Tripura with Kokborok. Siliguri corridor of West Bengal works as a bridge between North-East and mainland. Due this intense linkage with North-Eastern states this paper attempts to draw a comparative analysis between National news channel and Bengali regional news channel on the context of news from North-East. Previous studies revealed that representation of North-East in Indian mainstream media is very marginal. This paper will re-examine the notion by analysing content of news bulletin of five 24x7 Television news channels in English, Hindi and Bengali language.

Keywords- North-East, Mainstream media, Bengali, News Coverage, Representation

Introduction

North East India comprises of seven sister states- Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura and the eighth Himalayan state of Sikkim. The north eastern region occupies an area of 2, 62,230 sq. km., which is about 8 percent of the

total geographical area of the country. According to the 2011 census report the total population of the region is about 40 million which is 3.1 percent of the total Indian population of 1,210 billion.

This region has over 220 ethnic groups and equal number of dialects. In multiple language families like Indo-European, Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Kadai and Austro-Asiatic which have common structural features. The tribal people inhabits in the in the hill states of this region like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland as well as in the hill districts of Assam, Manipur and Tripura and also in the plain land of Assam, primarily the Brahmaputra valley with a certain degree of diversity even within individual communities. And also people of the regions like Tibet, Burma, Thailand, West Bengal, and Bangladesh have been migrated through the ages along with various historical events. And this is the very indicator of the cultural diversity of the region.

Thus North-East Indian region has distinct identity in its unique ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious characteristics which cannot be found in any part of the country. The religious diversity of the tribal communities, linguistic differences due to multiple language and dialects spoken by them, and unique features of geographical diversity and its impact on indigenous identity formation multiplied heterogeneous composition of this region (Karna, 1999).

The hills and forest area are the habitats of the tribal communities and it greatly isolated the communities both physically and socially from each other through the ages leading to the hindrances in any significant changes in their primitive economy and society due to lack of interaction with the outer world. This situation gradually transformed with the beginning of the colonial interventions in the 19th century and after the independence. The introduction of Christianity and its consequent influence, urbanisation and modern education and the increased immigration from within the country and even outside creates an exploitative situation in various sectors. They are exploited economically as being the source of the natural resources of the country – mineral resources and forest resources. Their land and forest are exploited by the so called civilised people which affects adversely the traditional forest based rituals and customs. By the time they could understand this situation, they are already considered as uncivilised people. Marginalised and exploited in their own land they

engaged themselves in ever intensifying conflicts in every sphere of their life- political, social, cultural, economic and linguistics (Nuh, 1999).

And this situation and their growing contact with the people outside the tribal communities have resulted into two consequences-the transformation of tribal social order on a scale unprecedented in their history and their introduction into the non tribal socio- cultural sphere and their cognition of new opportunities in independent India have generated desires and aspirations in a vast section of tribal population (Mipun and Nayak, 1999).

North-East region represents the diversity of the country. Though it is said that “unity in diversity” is the unique characteristic of India, attitude and behaviour of various sectors of the mainland of the country including the administrators, politicians, media, and social scientists, etc. are contrary to this notion. This section of the country is considered very much different from the mainland of the nation. “ The term ‘the North-East’ is relevant and valid only as a geographical entity, but unfortunately some misconceived notions of commonness have been attributed to it and this superimposition has been accepted as reality by the administrators , politicians, media and the majority of the social scientists” (Chaudhury, 1999). And the attributes of commonness are economic backwardness of the region, their sense of deprivation, their assertiveness towards their ethnicity and anxiety of losing their identity, and their insurgent activities for releasing themselves from ‘Indian domination’ (Chaudhury, 1999).

And this notion about the north eastern communities are carefully constructed through the collaboration of different sectors of the society and it leads to a certain extent the belief of the north eastern population of their alienation and individual identities due to these common features. And media has an important role to play in this situation of constructed reality of this region.

Media is considered the fourth estate in any democracy. The role of media is to collect, gather and disseminate relevant information to the people timely. Speed and objectivity is other key components of news. Media is considered agenda setters and gate keepers in the process of making an event into an issue. So in democratic and developing country like India which comprises of various people of different geographical region and religion, different language and dialects, different societies, cultures, and traditions, and also of different sources of

economy, the role of media should be to treat each and every aspects of the livelihood of the people of all regions with equal importance and thus attention. Exaggeration or understatement of any fact, and misrepresentation or total silence maintained over any fact by the media is derogatory to the proper functioning of democracy and hindrances in the path of inclusive growth and development. Thus instead of constructing reality through news media it has to represent reality with objectivity devoid of any bias and prejudice or any pre conceived notion about the issue. And thus media professionals have to know the situational aspects behind each and every matter with an open mind and proper knowledge of any aspects.

The media representation of the north eastern region has been studied continuously by the social scientists. The aim of this study is to re-research the nature of the representation. West Bengal shares its border with two north eastern states- Assam and Tripura. It connects north east with the mainland of the country and there is a significant portion of Bengali population living in Assam and Tripura and Bengali language besides regional languages has an importance in this region. And because of this connection Bengali media is considered for this study. It has been previously established that there is the dearth of north eastern representation in the national media. So both the national media and the Bengali media are considered to do a comparative analysis over the north eastern representation in these media. Media representation of the northern part of India is also analysed and compared with the north east as North India is also the neighbour of the north east India and many mainland national media have their base in north India. Television media is considered because of its comprehensibility to every sphere of the population due to its audio visual components.

The North Eastern Region

The north east region of the country is comprised of eight Indian states namely Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Sikkim. And the whole north east region is covered by the very important and significant and neighbouring countries like China, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Bhutan. This region have seen the military campaigns for the independence of the country, and various ethnic diversity and related wars, and linguistic separation due to multiple dialects of the ethnic groups of the region is the unique characteristic of this region.

From a very long time the people of this region had been being isolated from the mainland of the country socially and culturally and the imperialist British Government played a major role in it by introducing “inner line regulations” in 1873. The people living in the plain area could not enter in this region without the permission of the British Administration. And this area was administered as a backward region which later was changed into the system of excluded areas and then partially excluded area under the Indian Government Act 1935. But this attitude of the government greatly affected the interaction between the people of this hill region and the people of the plains. And the sense of isolation started to grow within the tribal communities. The result is that various autonomous movements have been arisen for the demand of different separate states within the country, or independent states outside the country, or different independent regions of individual identity.

The sense of alienation among the various ethnic communities projects an ethno cultural conflict in the political and social milieu of the region. And this existed till the administration of the oppressive British government before the independence which created the political demands among the communities for the inclusive development of the specific individual communities of the region. Since the beginning of the twentieth century various social movements have been arising in this region on various issues mostly based on questions on their specific individual identities originated from the isolation by the British administration and now compiled with various other issues like underdevelopment, security of land and natural resources, their specific cultures and dialects, customs and beliefs, their traditions, social and economic exploitation, changing social, economic, cultural scenario of the country leading to so called westernised modernity, and political dominance by the elite class people, etc. And also immigration has significant effects on the people of the region. Whatever they own are the common property resources like forests, land, lakes and rivers. And these are inseparable elements in their life as these are the very source of their livelihood and are related to their cultural identity. They consider the immigrants as the encroachers into their territories as the immigrants owned lands from their regions. And also the development projects displaced them from their own land which leads them towards conflicts more vigorously.

Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh is the 24th state of the Indian Union which has Bhutan in the west, Myanmar in the east, China to the north and north east and Assam in the south. It is one of the most beautiful, diverse and multilingual tribal area in the country. It is the largest region of the north east. It is rich in biodiversity and thousand of species of flora and fauna are present in almost sixty percent of this state. And there are also varieties of animals and birds. Arguably, the state has 26 tribes and many sub tribes in the state. They are originated from common stock but have distinctiveness in language, culture, customs, dress, and also the religious beliefs. For about 35% of the population of this state earn their livelihood from agriculture. 17% of the total land is used for agriculture. 62% of the state is forest area and the economy of the country is largely forest based specifically bamboo made product.

Assam

Assam is the gateway to the north east. And it is also rich in diverse flora and fauna, and green hills. The state is almost separated from the central India by Bangladesh. It is bound by Bangladesh, Nagaland and Manipur in the East, by West Bengal in the West, Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh in the North, and Meghalaya, Bangladesh, Tripura and Mizoram in the South. Brahmaputra flowed over a vast portion of the state. The ethnic origin of the Assamese people varies from Mongoloid tribes to the direct Indian stock. The primitive inhabitants of the state originated from Austric origin and they are called "Proto-Australoid".

The people of the Assam can be broadly divided into three categories-tribal, non tribal and the scheduled caste. And the tribes consist of ethno cultural groups. There are also migrants in this region. And they are liberal and diverse in religious faith. 22.41% of the area of the state is forest area. And 63% of the population engaged in the agricultural activities.

Manipur

Manipur is the "land of James". And it is covered with hills and lakes. This is geographically an isolated place. And 67% of the area occupies natural vegetation. And there are varieties of natural species. In Manipur various races and culture mixed through the ages. And the region is divided into two regions the valley and the surrounding hills. The economy of the country mainly depends on the agriculture. 88% of the population of the hill area and 60% of the valley region depends on agriculture along with animal husbandry, fishery, etc.

Meghalaya

Meghalaya is a Sanskrit word meaning "the adobe of cloud" became an autonomous State on 2nd April 1970. The full-fledged State of Meghalaya came into existence on 2nd January 1972. Meghalaya has precise historic, geographic and strategic significance for India. It has the state of Assam in north and east, and Bangladesh in south and west. The three geographical divisions in the state - Garo (Western), Khasi (Central) and Jaintia (Eastern) hill divisions. The tribes are mainly Khasi, Garo and Jaintia who are culturally rich and Christian in religious beliefs after the coming of Christian Missionaries in the region and before it they maintained their primitive beliefs. This state's economy largely based on the agriculture as 80% of its total population depends on agriculture. And about 70% of the state is covered with forests.

Mizoram

Mizoram is a mountainous region situated between Myanmar in the east and the south and Bangladesh and Tripura in the west and its northern region touched Assam and Manipur states. It was only one district of Assam until 1972. And then it became a union territory under the North Eastern Reorganisation Act 1972. It has varieties of flora and fauna and also has thick bamboo grooves.

Mizos are historically believed to be a part of the Mongolian race coming from the Eastern and Southern India centuries ago. And Mizo comprises of five major tribes. Historians believe that the Mizos are a part of the great wave of the Mongolian race spilling over the eastern and southern India centuries ago. They are of Mongoloid origin and they speak in a dialect of Tibeto-Burman origin.

Their society is very much integrated in nature devoid of any discrimination of gender and religion. Agriculture is their main profession and all their activities are related with the cultivation and their cultural expressions are always connected with the agricultural activities. Their religious faith is the Christianity. A vast portion of the state is forest covered. Mizoram has no major industry. And the reason may be that it is geographically alienated from the mainland of the country without proper communication. And it has also scarcity of mineral resources.

Nagaland

Nagaland is almost entirely inhabited by the Naga tribes except some Kukis, Kacharis, Garos, Mikris, Bengalis, and Assamese etc. in the plains sector. According to the census report Nagaland is a state made of hills. The hills are a continuation of the Burma Arc and joined with the Sub-Himalayan ranges in the north and extend into the hills of Manipur. Nagas speak many languages. And they are different in their cultural traits, and also in physical strature. Though they originated from the Mongoloid sect there are great differences between different tribes and also among different people in the same tribes. They maintained their ancestral customs and rituals as their religious behaviour. Agriculture is the base of the economy. More than 85% of the Naga population is dependent only on agriculture.

Tripura

Tripura is the ancient home of the Bodos, is located by the side of Bangladesh. Tripura is situated between the river valleys of Myanmar and Bangladesh. It is encircled by Bangladesh on three sides and it has Assam and Mizoram in the North East. 57.73 percent area of the state is covered by the forest where miscellaneous species exist. People of Tripura not only originated from different regions but they also constitute different ethnic groups. And they have distinguished ways of cultural expression varied from each other. The people of the state have different religious faith. Hindu religion is predominant due to the influence of their Hindu Kings. Tripura has some cotton industries only and agriculture is also an economic base and rice is the main crop.

Sikkim

Sikkim, another north-eastern state is located in the eastern Himalaya. It is one of the smallest states in India. Sikkim has Tibet in the north and northeast, Bhutan in the southeast, West Bengal in the south, and Nepal in the west. Before Sikkim was a sovereign region and it became an Indian state in 1975. This north eastern state has a political significance due to its location along with several international borders. Almost two thirds of Sikkim is covered with mountains which are always snow covered. Two fifths of the area of Sikkim is forest land. Various species of animals and birds and subtropical forests are found in this region. Three fourth of the population of Sikkim are from the origin of Nepal and they speak in the Nepali

dialect and of Hindu faith in religion and culture. On the other hand one fifth of the population are scheduled tribes consisting of prominent groups like Bhutia, Lepcha and Limbu. They speak in Tibeto-Burman dialects and Mahayan Buddhist in religious faith and also believe in Bon religion. There are also a Christian community and a Muslim community in Sikkim. Sikkim's economy is primarily based on agriculture and almost half of the working population of the region engaged in the agricultural activities. Along with this the farmers raised live stocks like cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, etc. The region has only cottage industry till 1971 but now it is developed with various small scale industries like processed food, small electronic parts, etc. Its culture is greatly influenced by the Tibetan Buddhist religion but they still gain certain traits of pre Buddhist customs in their culture from the tribes of the region.

Objective of the present Study

In the place of portraying whole country simultaneously television news channels only focus on some particular areas. A large geographical area of country remains absent in tele-visual space and it also lacks positive reporting. States of North-Eastern region is much neglected in Mainstream media.

This study provides a content analysis of news bulletin which will identify the coverage of news from North-East in National and Bengali 24 hour's news channels. The comparative study between National and Bengali news channel will determine how North-East is represented in National as well as Bengali news channels. The study will focus upon the comparative account on:

- To find out how much time is provided for the news of North-East in 24x7 National news channels.
- To find out how much time is provided for the news of North-East in 24x7 Bengali news channels.
- To compare the presence of different states of North East in Headlines.

Literature Review

Very few studies have been conducted on the representation of the north eastern region in the media of India. However, besides those few research papers and articles, many online forum

and various journals discussed about this specific issue and issues related to it. In an article, "Fourth Estate on Sale" (December, 2009) published in Economic and Political Weekly points about the media's saleability in the market which resists it to be an independent estate. Media's role is to disseminate information to all but it could also be a barrier in this mission. Before individual practitioners skewed news induced by the material prospects but now a day it became institutionalised in nature. And they sell space and time for coverage as in case of advertisement. And the article argued that "content became a side-issue in other words, since there was no value on it from the point of view of the publisher. From there to leveraging content itself as a direct revenue source was a short step".

In a special article named "Shooting the Sun: A Study of Death and Protest in Manipur" (October, 2009) Kshetrimayum established his view that while the killings of the people of Bihar and non Manipuris are widely covered by the national media, daily lives of the people of Manipur and their hurdles and consequent protests in life could not find space and time in the national media. According to him this is a bias as Manipur is considered an exceptional state due to its ethnic crisis. He pointed out that "The academia as well as the national media seem to have been stuck in the trap of late modernity, where the state is expected to respond to the "interests" of a "population" articulated in terms of tribe, ethnicity, insurgency, etc, while denying access to the ethos, and day to day lived experience of the Manipuris as a people".

In a HBC (Heinrich Boll Foundation) special report, "Text, Image and Vision: Media Representation of India's Northeast and Democratic Space" (2010) with the collaboration of Sadokpam it is said that "The rapid expansion of the media in India does not necessarily lead to wider coverage of the country's marginal or peripheral regions. The news covered by the metro-based media is insufficient compared to the quantum of issues confronting the Northeast region". And the studies also suggested that the media should not under represent and misrepresent the north eastern region due to the corporatisation, indifference and deficiency of proper Knowledge about the region.

In an IDSA (Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis) Comment, "Challenging Stereotypes: Reinventing the national discourse on the North East" (2014) Pandalai broadly discussed about the various features of the media representation of the North east India in different distinct situations. She outlines about the situation that the gravity and historical

reference of any issue or conflict is often not become understandable and relevant enough to the mass so that it can be built a public consciousness. According to her media has an important role to play in the national consensus building over these issues because of their access to the common people and it is the duty of the media to break stereotypes and make easily comprehensible narratives to disseminate it to the relevant people. She pointed out that this process may not resolve the conflict situation of the region but can built common frame of references and thus wider public interest in the region can be generated. And this may lead to public opinion formation and consensus building and subsequent mitigation and solution of the problem of this region.

“Assam turns inwards” by Anjuraag Baruah in The Hoot, a media watch website discussed on the scarcity of the English news bulletin in Assam ,one of the eight north eastern states which made a remarkable progress in the media sector. It argued for the necessecity of English language news because it is an only link language in a region populated by multiple tribes, various ethnic groups and languages. And also it can be a source of news and events to the mainland people and also mainland media.

The Foundation for Media Professionals in collaboration with the Nehru Memorial Museum & Library organised the 11th Media Dialogue on "North East: Fallen off the Media Map?" at NMML's Auditorium, Teen Murti Bhawan on March 31, 2010 (Thangkhal, 2010). And during the conversation between the panellists and the audience some issues came into the forefront like the dearth of people oriented stories which related to their livelihood. And also the question is aroused whether North East has fallen off the media map. And another point is considered that “North East should not be considered as too small or too far”.

Syed Zarir Hussain, managing editor of News Live, a news channel in Assam, said on the occasion that in mainstream media especially in TV channels the north east region finds a little space and the mindset of the editors and managerial staff of the mainstream media has to be changed to ensure its better coverage. And the experts also said that stories on development should be given importance besides stories on terrorism, violence and insurgency.

Media could take a significant role in informing people about the issues by reporting the events and giving them proper interpretations to the people of whole nation and thus can

generate significant changes in the mindset of the mainland people about the north eastern regions.

Thangkhal (April, 17, 2010) pointed out that North east people are considered poor by the mainlanders. And no proper understanding is existed between the north east and the mainland and media became unable to understand the psyche of alienation of the North east people. And according to him “It is the right time to sensitize the people in the media to cover the northeast states. There would be enough people throughout the country who would like to read it. The coverage of northeast in the mainstream media would play a vital role in shaping the minds of the Indians”.

A report “Coverage of North East in National Media” in Assam Tribune argued about the ignorance of the mainland on the north eastern states. And the report said that “The North-east has always been poorly represented in the national consciousness. It is almost as if the region doesn't exist even in the outer periphery of our collective consciousness”. It also stressed on the importance on the role of regional media and its responsibility to cover local stories and make it available to the mainstream media as early as possible. And the national media has a specific role to play to promote better understanding about an issue as “media control the mind of the masses”.

In a report (July 26, 2013) prepared by Indira Akoijam published in the online media watch organisation The Hoot shows that national media remained indifferent continuously to the coverage of the north east region issues. And the news published mainly is brief in form and hardly visible to attract the attention of the readers. The report argued that “Mainstream or not, the media realises that a region is worthy of coverage only when there is a story that will stir the entire nation”.

In the online forum “News Laundry”Nayyara Tabassum, a disgruntled Assamese in an open letter to the Indian ‘national’ media raised a question of the very validity of the nationality of the National media including print media and media channels regarding their scarcity of the coverage of issues of the Indian North Eastern region. It broadly outlines different types of discrimination to the north eastern region by the so called national media. It argued that media only focus on those issues which are saleable. It said that “national news media, today, does have the capability to create a kind of political and social accountability to the public.

They have the ability to create more transparency, build knowledge and disseminate it fast and effectively”. And this inattention not only affects the general people but also the interests of the state governments of the region. It also claimed for the coverage of the region within the National news coverage as the people of that region are “equal Indian citizens” (March 31, 2015).

In a comment published in Hindustan Times (Sept 29, 2014) it is discussed that though the flood situation and the post flood misery of the people and the government’s lack of preparation in the area of Uttarkhand and Kashmir are discussed in a regular proportion but the heavy rain and consequent flash floods and landslides in Assam and Meghalaya are hardly get space in the mainstream media. And it seems that north east does not have any existence anywhere in the sphere of “our collective consciousness” even though the challenges and difficulties of this region are very similar to the other mainland regions’.

In the dissertation paper “Coverage of Northeast India in the Indian Mainstream Media: A Study of the Perception of Northeast Indians Living in Bangalore” (2010) Basnett’s motivation behind the study is the communication gap about the north east public in the Indian mainstream media. And the perception of the North East Indian is that the north east region is only covered during the insurgencies which project a wrong impression of this region in the mind of the people of the mainland of the country.

In the online forum “Youth Ki Awaz” Khan in an article named “Is the Indian Media Biased against the North-Eastern States?” (August 27, 2011) gave instances of not due coverage of an event of bomb blast in the then time in north east region. And he also claimed that if the similar event happened in another mainland state it would have been given due importance and given huge coverage by the media. He also states that there is a necessity of changing of attitude of the Indian media towards the north eastern region. And he claimed that the people of north eastern region should be given their valid and just rights as Indian citizens. And media should cover each and every corner of the country.

In an article published in E-PAO, a media website “Making news of the absent - Hueiyen Lanpao Editorial: February 23, 2015 –“(February 23, 2015) outlines the shortcomings of the coverage of the north East India in the Indian mainstream media on viewing the content of mainland media which are “inaccurate news; hyperbolic reportage and news in the absence of

context and perspective”. And he also argues that as the reach of both the print and electronic media of India is significant, the representation of the North East should have been “manifold” besides various violence and conflict related issues.

In an article “Northeast India: Through the Prism of the National Media” (Nov 2, 2007) published in the website of Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies Sengupta widely discussed about “the skewed representation of north east in the mainstream media”. And it argued that media has a “myopic vision” of only violence and insurgency in the north east region and not the other issues. The article broadly discussed about various media both print and electronic media’s policy, news gathering arrangements, and outcomes and attitude in the representation of North east region.

North eastern region of India is almost always facing various troubles in its people’s livelihood. And media always show this perspective of the region as they are confined in their notion of the violence and insurgency of the region. This prejudiced notion in the mind of the people is enhanced through the mainland media representation. Plathottam in his paper “Truth, Integrity and Social Responsibility of Media: Going Beyond Blood-dripping Stories on Northeast India” (January, 2008) broadly discussed on this issue. He said that “Besides helping to perpetuate stereotypes and prejudices, media can set agendas, criterion, and social norms and also become guilty of branding certain areas as ‘trouble torn’, ‘militancy infested’. It could be anywhere in the world - Israel, Middle East, Pakistan, Africa, Sri Lanka. In India, formerly it used to be Punjab; now it is Kashmir and North East India. People living outside these regions have a ‘mediated’ and largely distorted, picture of the places and people”.

Research Questions

Based on the aforesaid discussion on the representation of North-East in Indian media, the following inquires were made in the study:

- How much time is provided for the news of North-East in 24x7 National news channels?
- How much time is provided for the news of North-East in 24x7 Bengali news channels?
- How much news from different states of North East make space in headlines?

Methodology

This study applied empirical research method. Empirical evidence or observation based data analyzed by quantitative content analysis. Bulletins of Two National news channels and three Bengali news channels analysed quantitatively which expressed result in term of quantity or amount.

Data Collection and Sampling

The primary data collected from the news bulletins of two National channels Ndtv 24x7 & Abp News and three Bengali news channels Abp Ananda, 24 Ghanta & Tara Newz. A Brief introduction of sample channels was given for better understanding:

1. *NDTV 24X7* : It is a news & current affairs television channel in English language. The channel launched on the year of 2003. Headquarter is situated in New Delhi.

2. *ABP News*, formerly known as Star news, is a Hindi channel launched on February, 1988. In the year 2012 Anandabazar Patrika group became the owner of this channel.

3. *ABP Ananda*, formerly known as Star Ananda, is a 24x7 Bengali news channel. It was owned by Anandabazar patrika group, News corporation ltd. (NCL) through Star TV & Fox International channel. The channel started from 1st June, 2005. After the seven years in 2012 the ownership transferred to Anandabazar patrika group only. The broadcast area of channel is India & USA. Headquarter of ABP Ananda situated in Kolkata.

4. *24 Ghanta* began its journey from 2006 by Zee Aakash News Pvt. Ltd. Its broadcast area in India & headquarter is in the capital of West Bengal, Kolkata.

5. *Tara newz*:The full form of Tara is Television aimed at regional audience. Tara newz is the first 24x7 Bengali news channel. The channel started its venture from 21st February, 2005 (international mother language day). Now the channel owned by Govt. of West Bengal. Headquarter of the channel is situated in Kolkata & Dhaka (capital of Bangladesh).

News bulletins of these channels were recorded by recording software from 1st February, 2015 to 31st March, 2015. One day from each week in February and March' 15 was taken for analysis by using Simple Random Sampling (SRS). The duration of recording was three hour

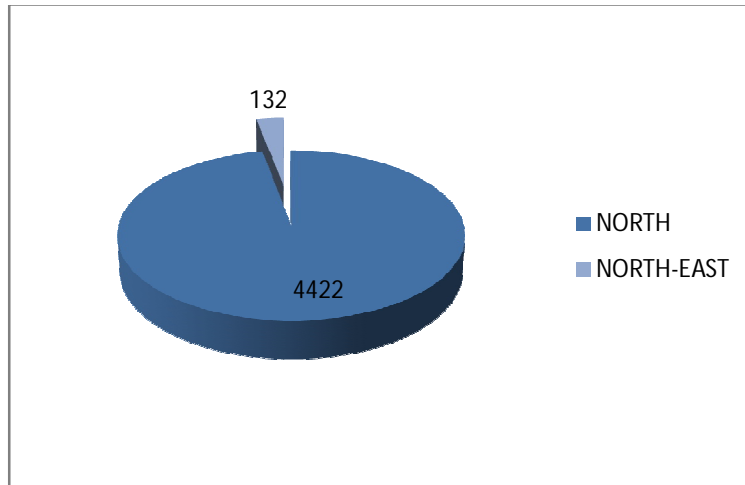
in a single day which was collected in three different times such as Morning shows, afternoon news and prime time. In total 24 hours data analyzed for this study. A total of 24 hours news bulletin presented in five sample channels in morning, afternoon and prime time shows during 1st February, 2015 to 31st March, 2015 came under this study. While selecting channels following aspects were taken to consideration:

1. In 1988 private news program in Doordarshan '*The World this Week*' produced by Pronoy Roy & Radhika Roy. The credible private news producer launched 24 hour news channels – NDTV 24x7. Historically this channel has a great value.
2. The channel Abp news owned by Ananda bazar Patrika group and it is very popular in Hindi news channel for its informational interpretation.
3. Abp Ananda is India's first national Bengali news channel. According to the TRP rating it has the highest viewership.
4. 24 Ghanta owned by India's 2nd biggest media brand Zee network. This channel gives in-depth news & views about local, regional, national & international issues.
5. Abp Ananda & 24 Ghanta is the most prominent news channel of West Bengal. These two channels lead a paradigm shift in the history of regional news channel in India.
6. Tara introduced Bengali audience with 24x7 new channel formats. This is the only Bengali news channel, which operated from Kolkata & Dhaka. It became nationalized on 23rd May 2013, which is a unique experience.

Results of Content Analysis

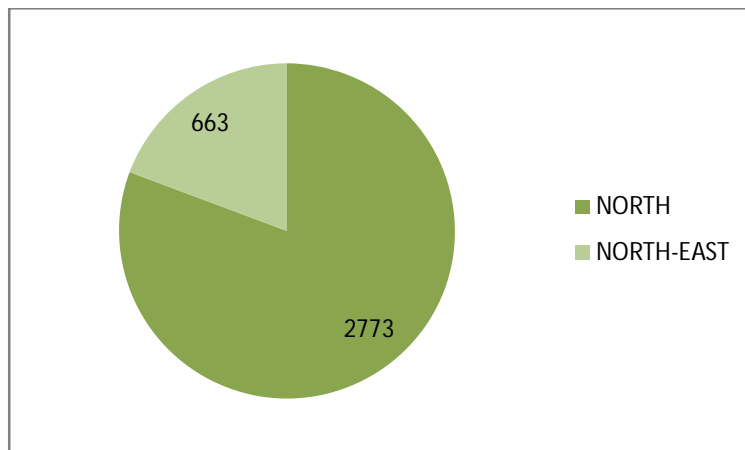
A comparison of time provided for the news of North-Eastern region (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim) and Northern Region (Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Jammu-Kashmir, Uttarakhand and the Union Territory of Delhi and Chandigarh) in 24x7 National news channels:

Figure 1: NATIONAL NEWS CHANNEL – CALCULATED IN SECONDS



A comparison of Time provided for the news of North-Eastern region (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim) and Northern Region (Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Jammu-Kashmir, Uttarakhand and the Union Territory of Delhi and Chandigarh) in 24x7 Bengali news channels:

Figure 2 BENGALI NEWS CHANNEL: CALCULATED IN SECONDS

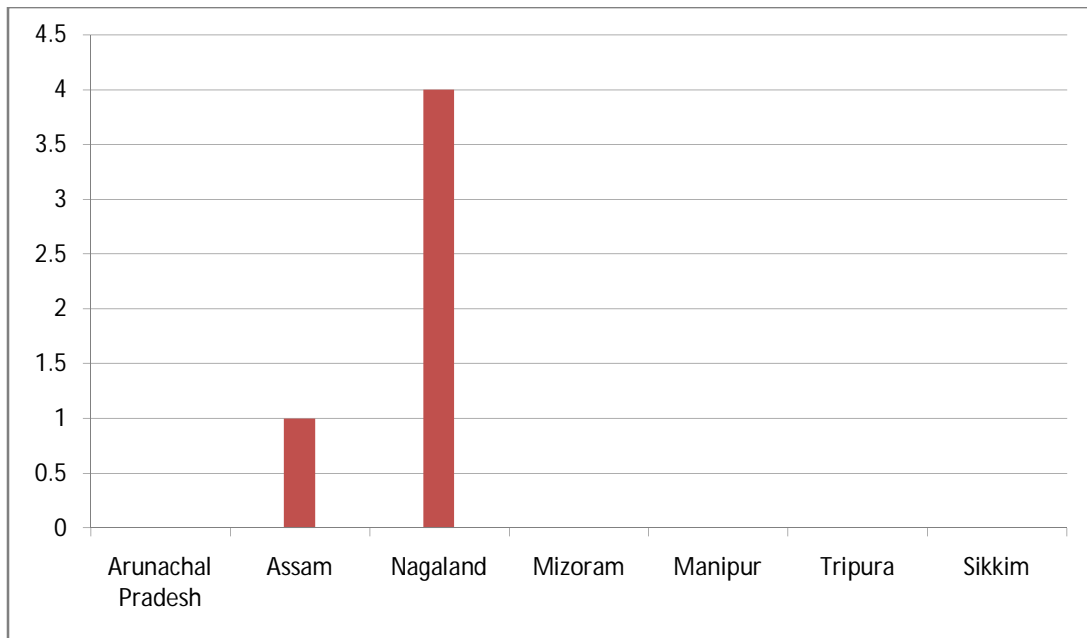


When News from Northeast get to the headlines:

On 5th March, 2015 Nagaland hits the headlines with news of serious violence in the Dimapur city. NDTV reports an alleged rapist, suspected to be an illegal infiltrator was thrashed and

killed by a mob which stormed the high-security central jail in Nagaland's commercial town of Dimapur. Due to this unfortunate incident Nagaland and Assam was able to make space in headline.

Figure 3 NATIONAL NEWS CHANNEL & BENGALI NEWS CHANNEL: NUMBER OF HEADLINES



Discussion

In the National news channels during the specific time period only 132 seconds time is given to north eastern Indian news compared to 4422 seconds time given to the North Indian news. North east India is given least importance compared to north India in national channels. This indicates a large discrimination between two regions in the National media (Figure 1).

In Bengali news channels within the specific time period 663 Seconds time is given to north East Indian issues while 2773 seconds time is given to the North Indian Issues. The discrimination between these two regions is less in Bengali media compared to the national media. The reason behind this may be that regional channel gives a major portion of time to the specific regional news but still the north-eastern representation in the Bengali channels is five times more than the representation in the national channel (Figure 2).

Comparing the representation of the north-east Indian and North Indian representation respectively in the national media and in the Bengali media channels, it is found that northern representation in National media approximately two times more than the representation of northern region in Bengali media. And in case of north eastern representation Bengali news channel cover the issues five times more than the national news channel coverage of north-eastern issues. While the ratio of northern and north eastern news coverage time (seconds) in National news channels is approximately 34:1 (4422:132), the same ratio in Bengali news channel is approximately 31:1 (2773:663). Thus in case of national media channels within the total time given to the north eastern news and the news of north 97.1 (approx) percent time is given to the northern news while only 2.86 (approx) percent time is allotted to the north eastern news and same way in case of Bengali media channels 96.88 (approx) percent of time is given to northern issues and only 3.1 (approx) percent time is used for the north eastern news coverage.

During the specific time period only two north eastern states get space in the headlines of both the national and Bengali news channels. The two states are Assam and Nagaland. And Assam gets space in headlines of one fourth time of the time and space given to the Nagaland in headlines of the media channels. This is also because of the violence in the Dimapur of Nagaland occurred due to an unfortunate case of rape. This is a conflict news which is given space and time in the media both national and regional while other issues are not covered by the media. These two states are represented only for the violence happened in that particular time period. This indicates that less importance is given to the north eastern states. And conflicts and violence are only newsworthy and important enough to get space and time in the headlines of the news channels. Nagaland is given more space in headlines than Assam because of the proximity of the specific conflict happened in Dimapur which is in Nagaland. While Assam may be given space in headlines in the Bengali news channels because of its connection with the west Bengal due to the presence of considerable portion of Bengali population and Bengali language in this state and due to its proximity with the mainland and considerable developmental activities (Figure 3).

Thus it can be seen that the discrimination between the northern region and north eastern region is great in media. And the north eastern representation in media is very poor. And only restive activities like violence and conflicts and to a certain extent proximity matters in case of the representation of the north east media in the media channels of the country.

Conclusion

Northern part of the country is mostly well covered by the media channels both national and regional. The issues of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra are given more space in the media channels while the news from other northern states like Gujarat, Rajasthan and Jammu & Kashmir also came regularly in the news channels. Delhi Assembly election and the victory of Aam Admi Party are covered largely and also follow up stories appeared regularly. The flood situation of Jammu and Kashmir and also various conflict situation of the region are regularly updated in both the national and Bengali news channels. In case of Eastern India Bihar and the state of West Bengal's issues are covered adequately. Constitutional crisis in Bihar due to the appointment of Nitish Kumar or Jitenram Manjhi as the chief minister of Bihar is given importance through heavy updates in the news media. Gang rape of seventy two years old nun in Ranaghat of West Bengal is also given space and time heavily in the media channels. The news about different political parties and the political equation in the region find large space and time in the media channels. But the north east India is of the least importance in the scenario of media channels. Nagaland lynching is the only issue which came in radar among all the issues of the north eastern states. Due to this incident home ministry declared high alert in Assam and this issue is covered by both the national and regional media channels.

Only the issues related to conflict matters in media representation in case of the north eastern region. Thus media of this democratic nation almost totally shun an important part of the nation as if they have no contribution in the nation building and have no existence in the map of the country. Being a frontier region due to sharing international border the region has to face many onslaughts of the independence war along the region. They have suffered greatly before independence due to colonial rule and even after independence due to the total avoidance by the social sectors including administrators and the media which could help have in the opinion formation and consensus building on various relevant and distinguished issues relating to different ethnic groups and their specific needs and desires.

Though the region is well exploited for its natural resources required for developmental activities performed by various agencies both government and non government, their individual identities are not given due importance which pushes them toward more alienation and marginalisation leading to never ending and more intensifying interrelated and individual

conflicts within the ethnic groups and also against the authority of Indian State. Media could have been able to mitigate the situation and move to a solution, but unfortunately it is also interested in the colonisation and commercialisation of news and bring forward certain pre-conceived notion of the alienation of the north eastern states from the mainland India.

Only insurgent activities of the region are given importance by the media and their rich culture and diversity, and the developmental aspects are of no significance to the media. Thus their representation as only the people of restive nature and conflict prone activities construct a negative and one dimensional image not only in the mind of the mainland people of India but also make them believe themselves to be of that particular negative image leading them towards more violence which only unstable the country itself and not more than that.

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