

2015-01-04

PPPR/MM/SPR-03

Update -03: An observation of state media behaviour during presidential election

The Programme for protection of public resources (PPPR) an initiative taken up by Transparency International of Sri Lanka (TISL) in order to combat corruption and for the protection of public resources, has commissioned a study of state media behaviour during presidential election campaigns.

This study is being conducted to ascertain whether the state – controlled print and electronic media, adhering to highest professional and globally accepted standards of accuracy and fairness, objectivity and balance, is fulfilling its obligation in providing voters with unbiased and non partisan coverage as well as a platform for public debate and discussion enabling them to make an informed decision. The research methodology, in keeping with prominent media monitoring practices, uses both quantitative and qualitative analysis of content and meaning. Observing of state media behaviour during elections conducted as part of the PPPR Programme will highlight the need for adherence, respect for code of ethics and elements of journalism and available spaces for public participation.

Regular updates will be issued from time to time based on the observations done about information published and broadcast over state print and electronic media institutions by the Media Observation Team of the Programme for Protection of Public Resources followed by a special final report.

We welcome your comments and feedback on the updates issued by the Media Monitoring Team, and observations on media behaviour, during the presidential election. We believe that your active engagement will help contribute to make the media monitoring process a success.

Send in your responses to 2015ppprmm@gmail.com

Media Monitoring, Transparency International Sri Lanka, 183/5, Highlevel Road, Colombo 6

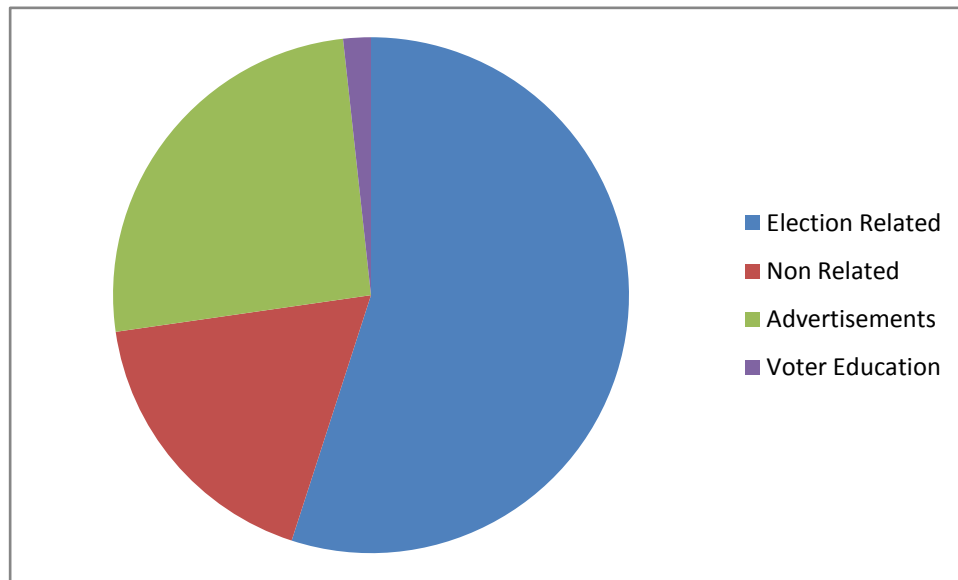
Given below is an analysis of the duration divided among the 19 candidates contesting for the presidential election in the Sinhala and Tamil news broadcasts, (night)over ITN and Rupavahini state television institutes in Rupavahini, ITN,Nethra and Vasantham channels from the 20th to 26th December 2014. This analysis has taken into consideration the time allocated for each

candidate, within election related news from the total time duration allocated for news broadcasts.

This analysis was conducted based on the guidelines (special gazette notification)¹ issued by the Commissioner of Elections for print and electronic media related to the presidential election and adhering to accepted professional journalism standards.

Electronic media coverage during presidential election **(Sri Lanka Rupavahini)-8p.m news (Sinhala)**

During the total week taken into consideration the total time duration of the 8p.m news was 231 minutes and 25 seconds. Out of this 59 minutes and 27 had been allocated for advertisements while 41 minutes and 39 seconds had been allocated for other news which are not related to the election. During the particular week time allocated for news on voter education had been 4 minutes and 17 seconds.



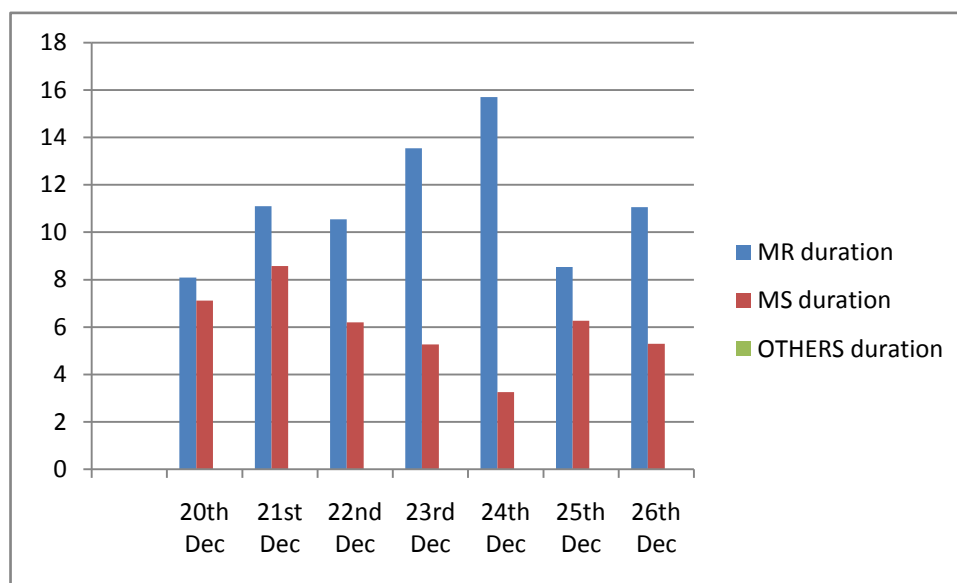
(Out of the total duration time divided between election related and non related news)

¹ 14th November 2014 no 1890/2 www.documents.gov.lk

Duration divided among all candidates in the news broadcasts over a week (20th to 26th December)

Sri Lanka Rupavahini – 8p.m news (Sinhala)

Minutes



MR - News related to the UPFA candidate of the presidential election (present president)

MS – News related to the candidate of the new democratic front

Others – News on other candidates

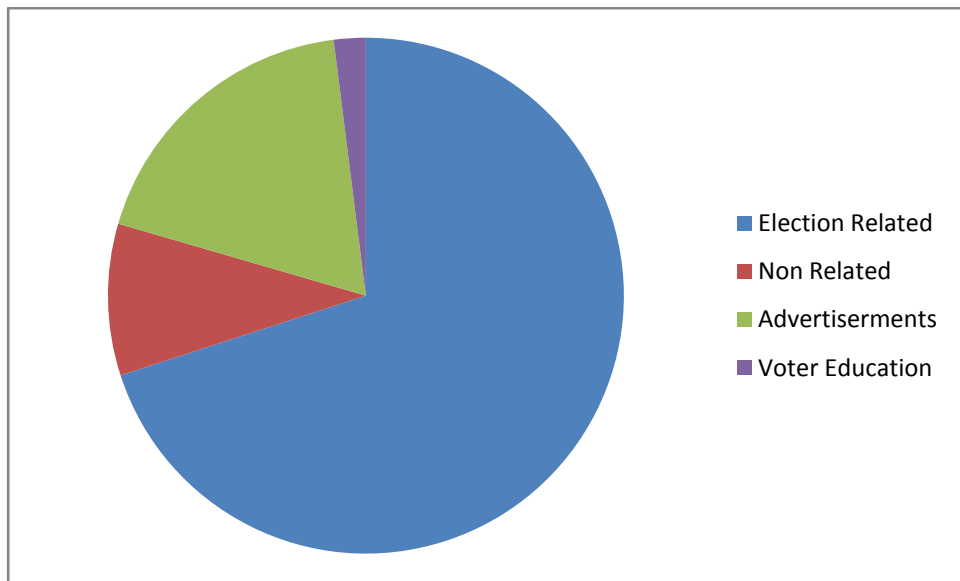
It was observed that every day during the week taken into consideration the presidential election candidate of the UPFA (78minutes and 57 seconds) had been featured, while out of other candidates only the candidate of the New Democratic front had been featured (42 minutes and 31 seconds).None of the other candidates had been featured during the news broadcast over the week taken into consideration.

Out of the total duration of the news related to the presidential election candidate of the UPFA, had been used to feature policies of the candidate, criticisms against other candidates and for positive image building of the candidate. Out of the total time duration given for news related to the presidential election candidate of the New Democratic Front, had been given for coverage of his meetings and to destroy his image.

Electronic media coverage during presidential election

(ITN)-7p.m news (Sinhala)

During the total week taken into consideration the total time of the news was 201 minutes and 07 seconds. Out of the 37 minutes and 22 seconds had been allocated for advertisements during the news broadcast and 18 minutes and 51 seconds had been allocated for news items not related to the election process. During the total week taken into consideration only 4 minutes and 04 seconds had been allocated for news items on voter education.

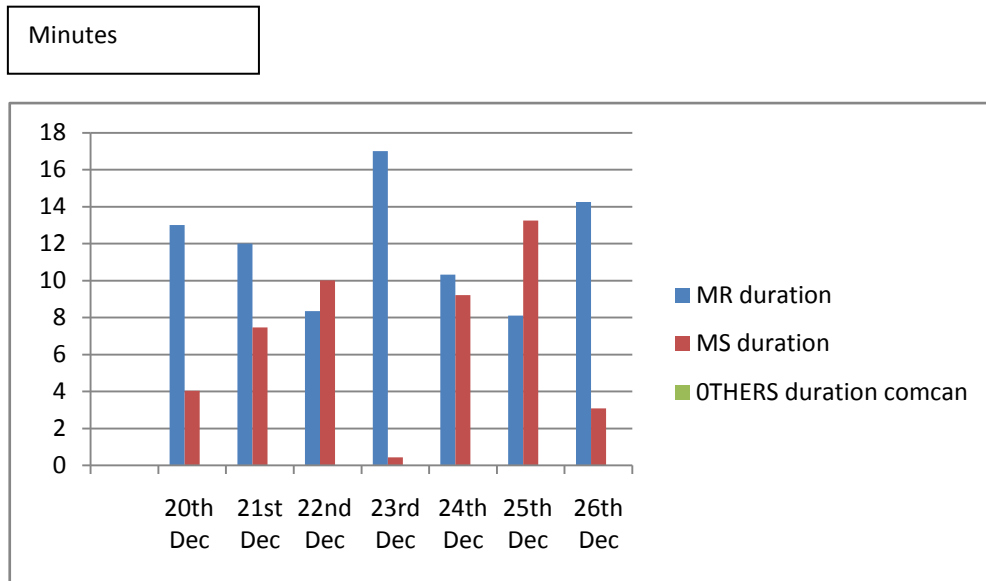


(Out of the total duration time divided between election related and non related news)

Duration divided among all candidates in the news broadcasts over a week

(20th to 26th December)

ITN – 7p.m news (Sinhala)



MR - News related to the UPFA candidate of the presidential election (present president)

MS – News related to the candidate of the New Democratic Front

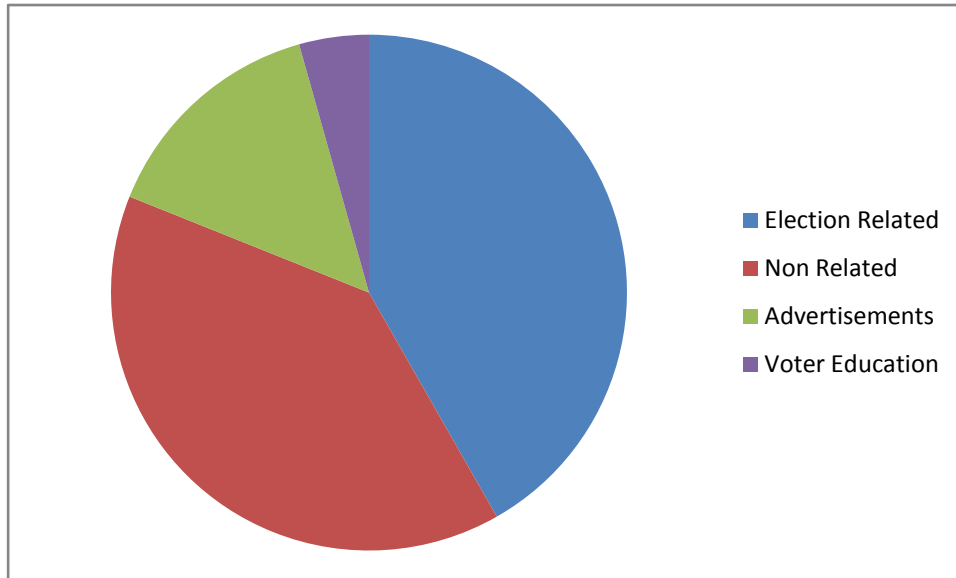
Others – News on other candidates

It was observed that every day during the week taken into consideration presidential election candidate of the UPFA (83minutes and 05 seconds)had been featured, while out of other candidates candidate of the New Democratic Front (47 minutes and 52 seconds)had been featured. None of the other candidates had been featured during the news broadcast over the week taken into consideration.

According to the observation, policies of the candidate, criticisms against other candidates and for positive image building of the candidate were the main features of the total duration of the news related to the presidential election candidate of the UPFA. Out of the total time duration given for news related to the presidential election candidate of the New Democratic Front had been given for speeches of members of the New Democratic Front that contradict each other and to destroy the image of the candidate.

Electronic media coverage during presidential election
(Sri Lanka Rupavahini)-7p.m news (Tamil)

During the total week taken into consideration the total time duration of the 7p.m news was of **Nethra** channel 205 minutes and 59 seconds. Out of this 30 minutes and 30 seconds had been allocated for advertisements while 81 minutes and 30 seconds had been allocated for other news which are not related to the election. During the particular week time allocated for news on voter education had been 9 minutes and 07 seconds only.

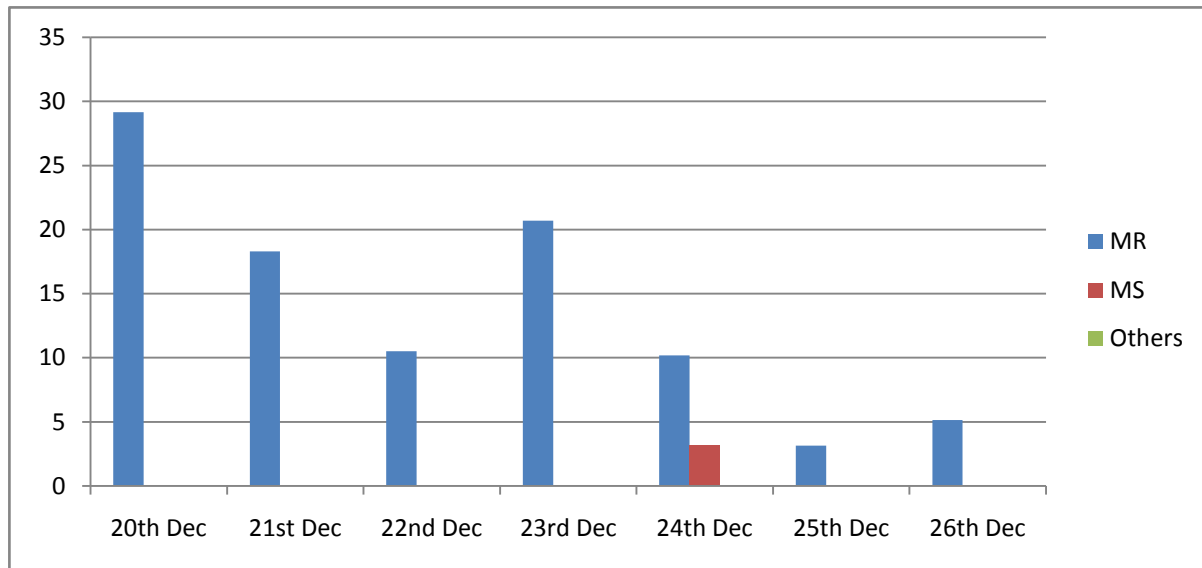


(Out of the total duration time divided between election related and non related news)

Duration divided among all candidates in the news broadcasts over a week
(20th to 26th December)

Sri Lanka Rupavahini – 7p.m news (Tamil -Nethra)

Minutes



MR - News related to the UPFA candidate of the presidential election (present president)

MS – News related to the candidate of the new democratic front

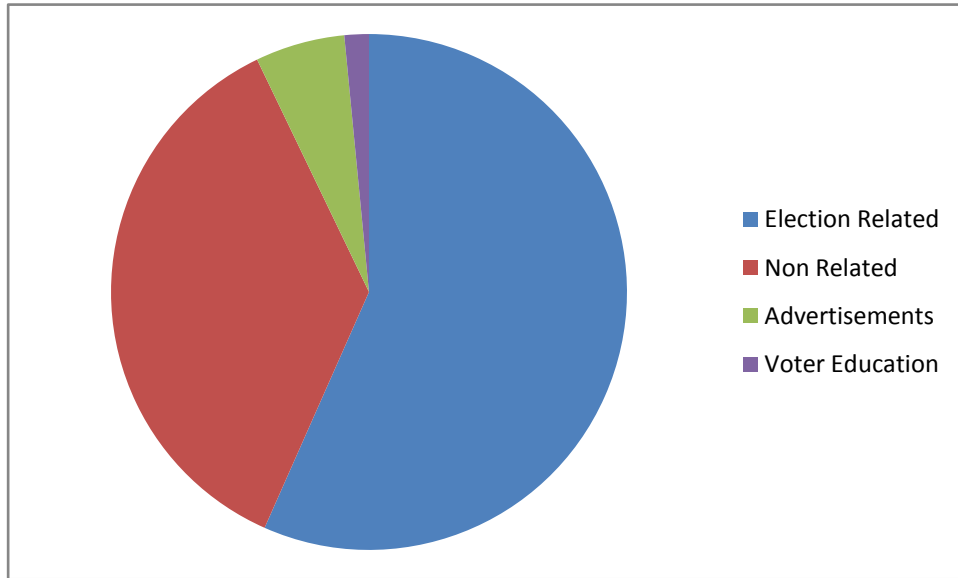
Others – News on other candidates

It was observed that every day during the week taken into consideration the presidential election candidate of the UPFA (97minutes and 12 seconds) had been featured, while out of other candidates only for the candidate of the New Democratic front (3minutes and 19 seconds) had been featured. No other candidate had been featured during the news broadcasts of Nethra over the week taken into consideration for the analysis.

Out of the total duration of the news related to the presidential election candidate of the UPFA had featured policies of the candidate, criticisms against other candidates and for positive building the image of the candidate. While the total duration provided for the candidate of the New Democratic Front had been used to destroy his image as his views presented had been distorted by editing speeches made by the candidate.

Electronic media coverage during presidential election
(ITN)-8p.m news (Tamil - Vasantham)

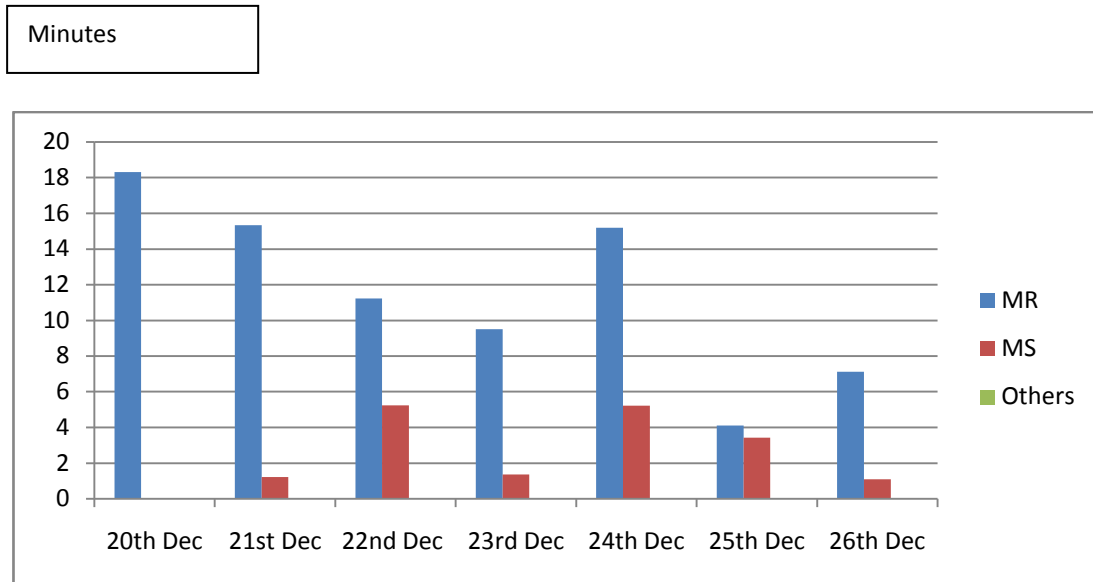
During the total week taken into consideration the total time duration of the 7p.m news was of **Vasantham** channel 196 minutes and 29 seconds. Out of this 11 minutes and 02 seconds had been allocated for advertisements, while 71 minutes 02 seconds have been allocated for other news which are not related to the election. During the particular week taken into consideration time allocated for news on voter education had been 3 minutes and 01 seconds only.



(Out of the total duration time divided between election related and non related news)

Duration divided among all candidates in the news broadcasts over a week
(20th to 26th December)

ITN – 8p.m news (Tamil- Vasantham)



MR - News related to the UPFA candidate of the presidential election
(present president)

MS – News related to the candidate of the new democratic front

Others – News on other candidates

It was observed that every day during the week taken into consideration the presidential election candidate of the UPFA (81 minutes and 18 seconds) had been featured, while out of other candidates only the candidate of the New Democratic Front (17 minutes and 57 seconds) had been featured in news. No other candidate had been featured during the news broadcasts of Vasantham over the week taken into consideration for the analysis.

Out of the total duration of the news related to the presidential election candidate of the UPFA had featured policies of the candidate, criticisms against other candidates and for building the image of the candidate. While the total duration provided for the candidate of the New Democratic Front had been used to destroy his image.

Common observations

Out of the total time duration in news broadcasts of both Sinhala and Tamil channels very little time which is about 5% had been allocated for voter education.

It was also observed that the accepted practices followed in professional journalism such as accuracy, fairness, balance and impartiality and the guidelines issued by the Commissioner of Elections related to media coverage during the presidential election had been violated.

Another observation is that in a context where the general public depends on media for information on current affairs one sided or partiality of state media hinders a free and fair election process, and at the same time, despite the Elections Commissioners efforts to ensure a balance and accuracy the state media institutions seem to disregard the guidelines and media ethics in their coverage.

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Executive Director
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