

2015-01-06

PPPR/MM/SR-04

## Update -04: An observation of state media (Electronic –radio) 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](mailto:2015ppprmm@gmail.com)

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

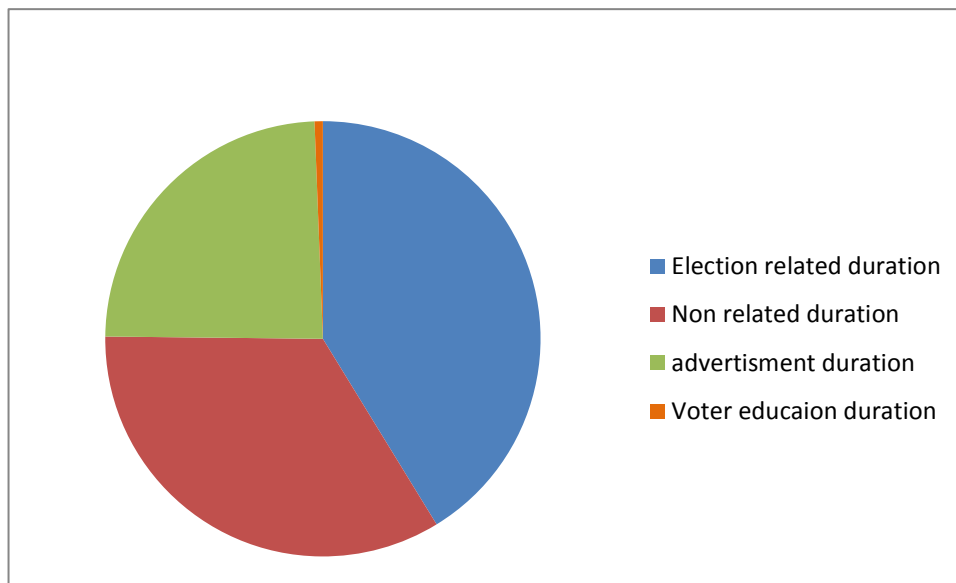
Given below is an analysis of the duration divided among the 19 candidates contesting for the presidential election in the Sinhala news broadcasts, (morning)over Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation and ITN over City FM and Lakhanda channels from the 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

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)<sup>1</sup> 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 Broadcasting Corporation)-6 a.m news (Sinhala)**

During the total week taken into consideration the total time duration of the 6 a.m City FM news was 68 minutes and 46 seconds. Out of this 16 minutes and 58 seconds had been allocated for advertisements while 23 minutes and 22 seconds had been allocated for other news which are not related to the election. The total time duration of election related news was 28 minutes 24 seconds. During the particular days taken into consideration time allocated for news on voter education had been only 42 seconds.



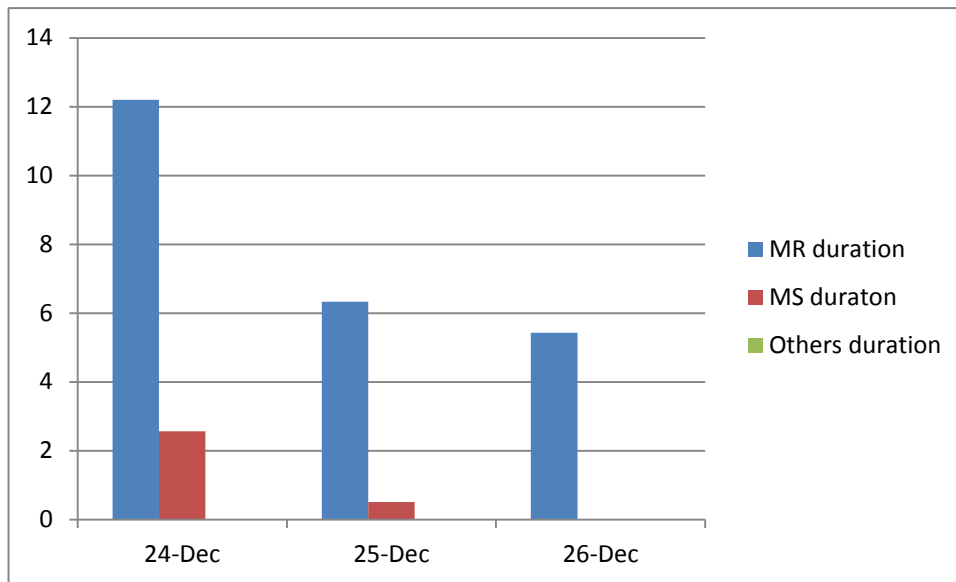
(Out of the total duration time divided among election related items, advertisements, voter education and items not related to the education)

<sup>1</sup> 14<sup>th</sup> November 2014 no 1890/2 [www.documents.gov.lk](http://www.documents.gov.lk)

**Duration divided among all candidates in the news broadcasts over three days (24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> December)**

**City FM – 6 am 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 (24 minutes and 36 seconds) had been featured, while out of other candidates only the candidate of the New Democratic front had been featured (3 minutes and 48 seconds). None of the other candidates had been featured during the news broadcast over the three days taken into consideration.

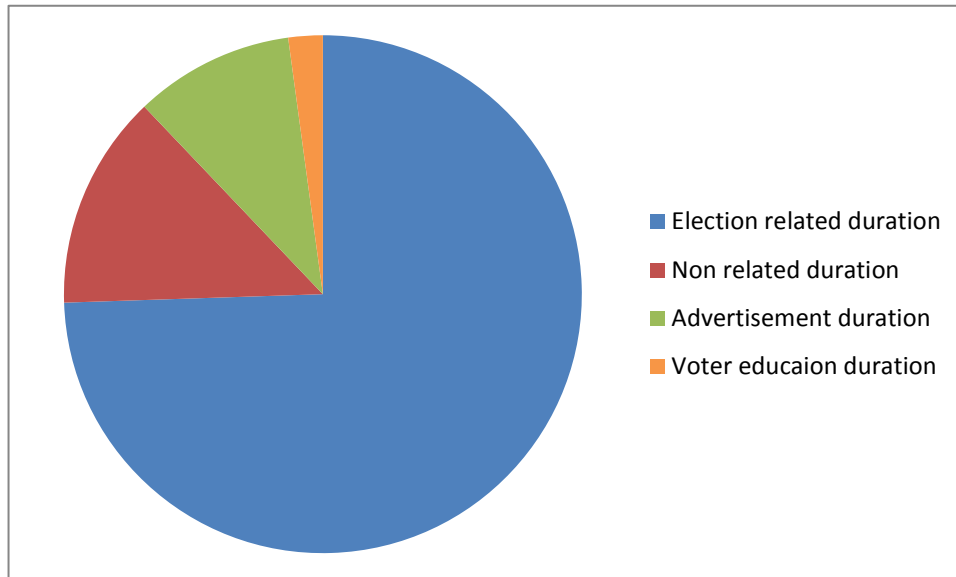
Out of the total duration of the news related to the presidential election candidate of the UPFA, had been used to feature policies of the candidate, criticisms against other candidates and for positive image building of the candidate. Out of the total time duration given for news related to

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**

### **Lakhandu(ITN)-6 a.m news “Puwaath horawa” (Sinhala)**

During the three days taken into consideration the total time of the news was 116 minutes and 07 seconds. Out of the 11 minutes and 53 seconds had been allocated for advertisements during the news broadcast and 15 minutes and 51 seconds had been allocated for news items not related to the election process. During the three days taken into consideration the total duration of election related items was 86 minutes and 15 seconds and only 2 minutes and 48 seconds had been allocated for news items on voter education.

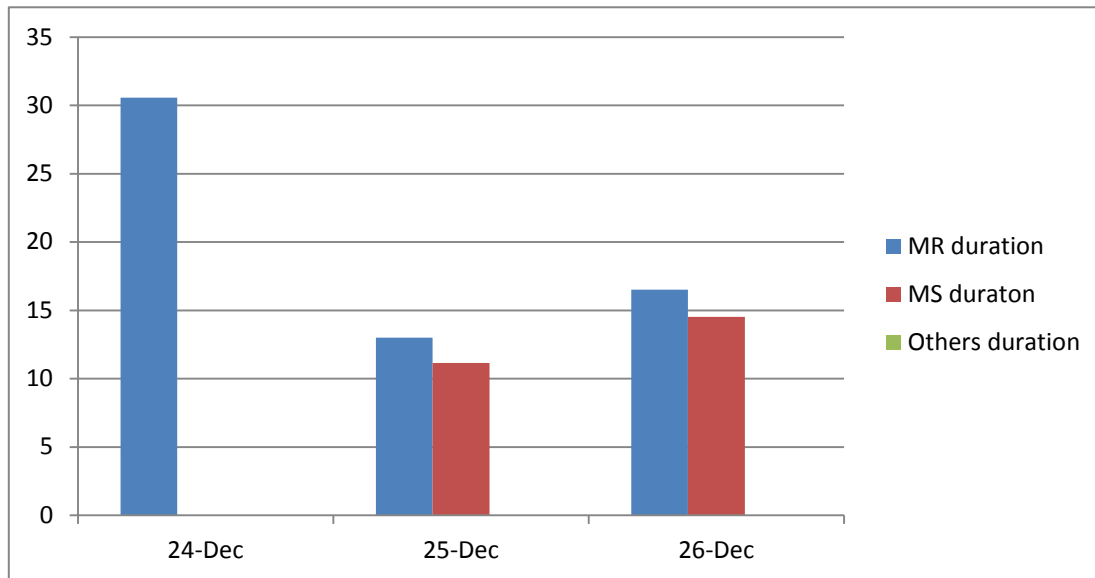


(Out of the total duration time divided among election related items, advertisements, voter education and items not related to the education)

## Duration divided among all candidates in the news broadcasts

(20<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> December)

### Lakhanda(ITN)-6a.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 three days taken into consideration presidential election candidate of the UPFA (60 minutes and 09 seconds) had been featured, while out of other candidates candidate of the New Democratic Front (26 minutes and 06 seconds) had been featured. None of the other candidates had been featured during the news broadcast over the three days 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.

### **Common observations**

Out of the total time duration in news broadcasts of both Sinhala radio channels very little time which is less than 3% 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 not only within print media but also among state radio channels (City FM and Lakhanda). The air time allocated for candidates within news broadcast is unfairly divided and only one candidate is allocated time during the news broadcast.

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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