

# **Local Government Elections - 2006**

## **2<sup>ND</sup> INTERIM REPORT ON THE BEHAVIOUR OF ELECTRONICS AND PRINTED MEDIA**

**FROM 16.02.2006 TO 22.03.2006**

### **1. Introduction**

Can any one of us imagine of a society, where the mass media is not playing a pivotal roll of making public opinion? The reply, with a hidden sarcastic gesture, will definitely be in negative form. No matter how hard we try, none of us will be succeed to discover such an Utopian State within our living planet. This elementary basic truth reminds us for the umpteenth time, the significance of the mass media in modern era, as a modulator in modifying the social consciousness and disseminating the human knowledge and news among fellow citizens.

Our forefathers would not have conceived the idea of sitting passively for hours staring at moving pictures emanating from a box, or keep listening to the rhythmic sounds coming out of another box. Nevertheless, the average citizen in modern day spends a considerable time watching or listening TV, Radio and reading Newspapers. In that context, it is obvious that the mass media acts as a fore runner in disseminating information and to determine the direction of public opinion. Based on the above, PAFFREL has prepared its 2<sup>nd</sup> interim report on the behaviour of mass media during pre-election period.

### **2. Methodology of Observation**

In order to ease the practical difficulties that could arise due to the vastness of the subject field, the whole exercise have been divided into two main logical sections, viz.:-

- I. Electronics media
- II. Printed media

In our view it would be irrelevant to describe the methodology in this report again, as 1<sup>st</sup> interim report carried a comprehensive detail of the adopted criteria which we used to judge the behaviour of media.

### **3. Electronic Media Observation**

The patterns appeared in the behaviour of Electronics media have been studied under two main sections.

- I. News bulletins
- II. Political programmes

Again the behaviour of the electronics media under the State Media and the Private Media were evaluated separately. The fact that the ownership of Mass Media

make a deep impression and impact towards the tendency of the programmes, has made us to study the media behaviour under the ownership categorized as State Media and Private Media.

### 3.1. News bulletins of Electronic Media

3.1.1. The data collected according to the adopted methodology is shown in the Table 1, with regard to State Media.

**Table I**

Behaviour pattern of electronic media under the state ownership (from 01.03.2006 – 22.03.2006)

	RUPAVAHINI		ITN		SLBC		LAKHANDA	
	Minutes	Minutes	Minutes	Minutes	Minutes	Minutes	Minutes	Minutes
Total airtime	546.82	515.02	289.19	242.94				
Local news	444.28	443.28	198.43	182.53				
Foreign news	49.98	37.01	50.48	29.28				
Business/sports & weather news	52.56	34.73	40.28	31.13				
	FAV.	UNF.	FAV.	UNF.	FAV.	UNF.	FAV.	UNF.
UPFA	142.15	-	84.26	0.85	30.25	-	35.43	-
%	31.99	-	19.1	0.19	15.24	-	19.4	-
UNP	4.41	12.2	6.06	12.85	-	2.01	-	2.41
%	0.98	2.75	1.37	2.8	-	1.03	-	1.32
JVP	24.51	-	10.22	-	1.00	-	2.00	-
%	5.52	-	2.31	-	0.5	-	1.1	-
JHU	3.71	-	0.6	-	-	-	-	-
%	0.83	-	0.13	-	-	-	-	-
TNA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Socialist front		-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Independent groups	0.58	-	-	-	0.80	-	2.0	-
%	0.13	-	-	-	0.4	-	1.1	-
Total of Political News	187.56		114.84		34.06		41.84	
Other news	256.72		328.44		164.37		140.69	
%	57.8		74.1		82.83		77.08	

(\* FAV. – Favourable UNF. – Unfavourable)

\* The seconds have been converted to decimal places.

\* The other news indicates the result of Local News less political news.

\* The total airtime allocated for news bulletins in the State Media

– Min. 1593.97 (26 hrs. 34 min.)

\* The total airtime given for Local News

– Min. 1269 (21hrs. 09 min.)

\* The total airtime for Foreign News

– Min. 167 (2 hrs. 46 min.)

\* Business/sports/weather news

– Min. 159 (2 hrs. 39 min.)

Favourable and unfavourable News for each party - the percentage of the Political News are as follows.

**Table 2**

	Total airtime	Favourable		Unfavourable	
	Min.	Min.	Percentage	Min.	Percentage
UPFA	292.85	292	77.18%	0.85	0.26%
UNP	39.94	10.47	2.76%	29.47	7.79%
JVP	37.73	37.73	9.97%	-	-
JHU	7.69	4.31	1.15%	3.38%	0.89%
Total airtime	378.21				

\* When we analyze the tables No. 1 and Table No. 2 we can identify the following characteristics associated with state media behaviour.

- i. In Rupavahini, SLBC and Lakhanda, not a single news item appeared unfavourable to UPFA.
- ii. Of 22 news bulletins telecast for consecutive 22 days, total air time given for any unfavourable news for UPFA, is less than minute in ITN news.
- iii. Whatever the news presented in connection with JVP, were favourable to them. Total air time for them was 37.73 minutes.
- iv. Out of total air time of 378.21 minutes, only 29.47 or 7.79% percentage of air time has been allocated to the main opposition party, UNP.
- v. Comparatively, the JVP has been provided a more favourable publicity over UNP, given the state media have not brought a single news items unfavorable for the former.
- vi. Accordingly, out of total air time allocated for political news 292.85 minutes or 77.18% airtime has been used to broadcast favourable news to UPFA.

3.1.2 Overall assessment of the electronics media under private media is shown in Annex IX.

- In our observation it was revealed that among the TV channels, TV Lanka has allocated a most number of minutes, (64.16 min) favourable to UPFA in comparison to other private TV stations.
- TNL has allocated 44.66 minutes to telecast news favourable to UNP. This figure stands as the highest number in the TV stations.
- Comparatively, Swarnavahini has shown more neutral of reporting news in comparison to the other media.

3.1.3 Annex "X" indicates the behaviour of Private radio stations.

- Neth FM in broadcasting their news bulletins has given a prominent place for the favorable news to UPFA. The airtime is 23.56 minutes, which stands as the highest number favourable to UPFA in whole private radio stations.
- Isira Fm has allocated an air time of 32.9 minutes for the news favourable to UNP.

3.2 Table 3 and Table 4 indicates the summarized data of the behaviour pattern of Private Electronics Media.

**Table 3**

	Private Radio		Private TV		FM/TV Total of Airtime
	Favourable	Unfavourable	Favourable	Unfavourable	
UPFA	104.39	74.89	217	108	608.67
	<b>26.52%</b>	<b>19.03%</b>	<b>34.7%</b>	<b>17.3%</b>	<b>54.2%</b>
UNP	155.12	13.25	210	10	388.37
	<b>39.41%</b>	<b>3.37%</b>	<b>33.6%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>34.6%</b>
JVP	17.12	11.31	33	25.4	86.83
	<b>4.35%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>7.73%</b>
JHU	17.39	-	17.54	4.33	39.26
	<b>4.42%</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>

**Table 4**

Behaviour of Private media- TVs and Radio station together.

Political Party	Favourable	Percentage	Unfavourable	Percentage
UPFA	321.39	41.65%	182.89	73.99%
UNP	365.12	47.32%	23.25	9.4%
JVP	50.12	6.49%	36.71	14.86%
JHU	34.93	4.54%	4.33	1.75%

- According to the above table 4, in the whole private media (both TVs and Radios) more number of news has been presented to the viewers and listeners, favourable to UNP. The air time is 365.12 minutes. Similarly, 182.89 of air time have been used to present news items unfavourable to UPFA.

### 3.3. The Political Programmes in TV Channels

3.3.1. The political programmes periodically telecast in the TV channels are widely watched by sleepless viewers during the election period. Therefore in an attempt to assess the political tend of these programmes, our monitoring team selected four political programmes, namely, “Senkolaya” in National Television, “Thulawa” in ITN, “Janahanda” in TNL and “Minnel” in MTV, for the observation.

3.3.2. Two “Senkolaya” programmes have been taken in to consideration for the purpose of observation. Of the two programmes, one “Senkolaya” programme has been dedicated to discuss the matters related to election laws and the possible remedial actions to prevent of breaching them. The other programme, though the theme was to discuss on the issues related to the right of women, concluded in highlighting the UPFA policies. According to our calculations, while the representative of UPFA, The Minister, Pavitra Wanniarachchi has been allocated a total number of 18.32 minutes, the representative from UNP, The MP, Ms. Thalatha Athukorala has been given to express her views for 12 minutes.

3.3.3. "Thulawa" the weekly political programme, in ITN were observed by our team. Of the three programmes during this period, in one programme, where some of the journalists and intellectuals participated, UPFA agenda was highly admired and appreciated. No political views of any other political parties were presented at this occasion. At the second "Thulawa" programme, for the views of JVP has been given more time than that of given to the other parties. In this occasion 31 minutes were allocated to JVP, while, for UPFA - 27 minutes, for UNP - 27 minutes, and JHU - 24 have been reserved to express their political ideas. Third programme was not reserved to discuss political issues. Therefore, that programme could be considered as a neutral programme.

3.3.4. Three "Janahanda" programmes of TNL were telecast during this period. One of them has been reserved to discuss the significance of Local Authorities etc. This programme went on and concluded without engaging in to party political issues. However, in connection to the other two programmes, this version is not appropriate.

3.3.5. "Minnel" programme telecast by MTV is reserved for political discussions. Of the two programmes we have observed, 27 minutes were used by participants to express the ideas which could be considered as unfavourable to UPFA during the programme. However, the compere of that programme has behaved himself in an impartial manner in conducting the programme.

## **4. Printed Media**

4.1. For this analyze we have used the Newspapers, following the methodology described in our 1<sup>st</sup> Interim Report on; 15.03.2006. The Annex I and II indicates the data collected from respective newspapers. By studying those charts, it may be easier for any interested party, to see the pattern of behaviour of each Newspaper.

4.2. The Annex No. 8, is the result of an effort to assess the newspapers in accordance to the ownership of the newspapers.

4.2.1. The newspapers belonged to Lake house published political news items 11.1% as against to total news in their papers. The extent was 368,123 cm. Wijaya Publications has allocated 10.7% of space of their papers for political news. The other Newspapers published by the companies have reserved the space for political news in following percentage. Upali Newspapers Ltd. - 8.5%, Sumathi Newspapers Ltd. 16.2%, Lithira Publicatiosn 17%, Ravaya Publications 10.1%, Sathdina Publications 28.4%, Virakesari Newspapers Ltd. 11%, Sudar Oli Newspapers 13%, Thinakural Newspaper 11.9%

4.2.2. ★ Of the all newspapers, the publications belonged to Lake House Newspaper company, have published the most number of news favourable to UPFA. The percentage is 26.87%.

★ The newspapers belonged to Sumathi Newspaper company, have given the publicity for the highest number of news favourable to UNP. The percentage is 19.65%.

★ Of all the newspapers, publications belonged to Upali Newspaper company, have published the most number of news favourable to JVP and JHU. The percentages are respectively, 9.86% and 3.8%

★ Lithira Publications are seemed to be in a tendency to publish the highest number of news items Unfavourable to UPFA. The percentage is 13.43%. Most number of news that came out of press, unfavourable to UNP were appeared in Sathdina Publication. The percentage is 15.34%.

4.2.3. Following table shows the behaviour pattern of the whole newspapers, categorized under State Printed Media and Private Printed Media, during pre-election period.

**General Behaviour of Printed Media**  
**From 16.02.2006 to 22.03.2006**

Political Party	STATE MEDIA		PRIVATE MEDIA	
	Favourable	Unfavourable	Favourable	Unfavourable
UPFA	26.87%	0.01%	9.84%	2.16%
UNP	11.77%	1.98%	13.34%	2.78%
JVP	7.39%	0.33%	4.24%	4.07%
JHU	2.86%	-	1.7%	0.08%

4.2.4. Ultimately, the State Printed Media has favoured towards UPFA over UNP by 15.1%. The Private Printed Media has indicated bias towards UNP over UPFA by 3.5%. Therefore it is evident, in comparison to State Media, the Private Printed Media are more neutral in presenting the news items.