



CENTRE FOR MONITORING ELECTION VIOLENCE

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தேர்தல் வன்முறைகளைக் கண்காணிப்பதற்கான நிலையம்

Overview of Estimated Election Campaign Costs Monitoring Initiative Parliamentary Election 2020

In Sri Lanka, there is currently no legal framework that obligates candidates contesting elections to disclose the costs they incur for election campaigning. The absence of campaign finance legislation has always resulted in enormous disparities in elections held in Sri Lanka and prevents there being a level playing field for all candidates. The issue here is not the question of which party or candidate has access to the largest amount of money, but rather whether voters can know how much money has been utilised and for what purpose. This in turn is followed by favours to donors once a candidate is in office, and the further institutionalisation of corruption in the body politic.

Methodology

The Estimated Election Campaign Cost Monitoring initiative computes the “costs” incurred in the election campaign by candidates, their political parties, or on their behalf, for promoting or procuring their election. It also includes the misuse of state property where estimates of property can be made.

For this purpose, CMEV considers four cost categories framed around the Draft Campaign Finance Legislation designed by the Election Commission (currently pending Parliamentary introduction):

1. Printed Media (covering 28 newspapers – 15 in Sinhala, 04 in Tamil and 09 in English)
 - Daily front to back monitoring of each newspaper.
 - The newspapers monitored are the highest circulation newspapers in Sri Lanka.
2. Electronic Media (covering 09 TV channels, 08 in Sinhala and 01 in Tamil and 05 radio channels, 04 in Sinhala and 01 in Tamil)
 - Daily monitoring of each TV channel between the hours of 6.00AM–12.00AM and each Radio channel between the hours of 6.00AM–10.00AM and 5.00PM–9.00PM
 - The TV and radio channels monitored have high viewer/listenership
 - As discount packages offered by channels to candidates and parties vary, a 15% discount rate was applied to the final gross estimate to arrive at the final estimated figure
3. Social Media (covering paid advertising and sponsored pages on Facebook)
 - Analysis of expenses for paid advertising above USD 100 and sponsored pages for the 150 highest spending candidates noted in the Facebook Ad Library’s weekly report.
4. Other costs (covering costs of meetings, public rallies, goods distribution, promotional materials, etc.)
 - Based on information submitted by CMEV’s field monitors at the electorate level during their regular election monitoring activities, as relayed through district coordinators and provincial coordinators under the supervision of CMEV’s Operations Manager and its National Coordinator

Cost Calculation Method

Expenses are initially calculated by media monitors assigned for each category while the first level data verification take place subsequently. After data transfer and entry is completed, the second level checking and verifications of costing takes place using rate cards for newspapers and TV and radio channels, and receipts for physical expenses procured through field monitoring. These are all tallied in a final analysis.

The cost calculation method used to generate the estimated election campaign cost is as follows:

Cost of Print Media + Cost of Electronic Media + Cost of Social Media + Other Costs = ESTIMATED ELECTION CAMPAIGN COST

Limitations

- Under the four cost categories CMEV considers, the following limitations exist:
 - The Printed Media figure does not capture expenses incurred for other newspapers, however, there is a small number of such newspapers, and candidates would be less compelled to advertise on them anyway – As such, this figure is closest to the actual campaign expenses on printed media
 - The Electronic Media figure does not capture expenses incurred for other channels (with lower viewer/listenership); discounts provided for advertisement packages; and advertisements aired during the hours of 12AM–6.00AM for TV and 10.00AM–5.00PM and 9.00PM–6.00AM for Radio – As such, this figure is moderately close to the actual campaign expenses on electronic media
 - The Social Media figure does not capture advertisements costing less than USD 100, the expenses of non-Top 150 candidates, or official candidate spending on other social media platforms (including Twitter, Youtube, Reddit etc.) It also does not capture expenses incurred on candidates' behalf by digital media marketing companies and supporters on Facebook itself and elsewhere, as these entities have no legal obligation to publish expense information publicly – As such, this figure only captures a small part of the actual campaign expenses on social media
 - The Other Costs figure captures what is observed at the field level. While CMEV deploys field monitors across all electoral districts, this cannot cover every locality, particularly more remote areas. Certain expenses are also easier to capture than others (e.g. the costs for a fixed event such a rally can be estimated more easily than for leaflet distribution at the street level) – As such, this figure only captures a small part of the actual campaign expenses on the field level
- Expenses incurred in the distribution of direct cash payments and illegal items (such as illicit liquor) are not captured.
- Expenses incurred through the misuse of state resources are also not captured as such information cannot be directly obtained from state institutions and as it is impossible to monitor all state institutions
- Given all these limitations, CMEV believes that its monitoring captures roughly 30% of the actual campaign expenses incurred by candidates and parties during the election

Monitored Media Sources

	Monitored Newspapers S-Sinhala / T-Tamil / E-English	Monitored Television Channels S-Sinhala / T-Tamil	Monitored Radio Channels S-Sinhala / T-Tamil
1	Dinamina (Daily except Sunday) – S	Sri Lanka Rupavahini – S	Siyath FM – S
2	Daily News – E	Sirasa TV – S	Sirasa FM – S
3	Sunday Observer – E	Ada Derana – S	FM Derana – S
4	Thinakaran – T	Hiru TV – S	Hiru FM – S
5	Rasa – S	ITN – S	Sooriyan FM – T
6	Silumina – S	TNL – S	
7	Mawbima (Daily) – S	Swarnawahini – S	
8	Ceylon Today – E	Siyatha TV – S	
9	Sunday Mawbima – S	Shakthi – T	
10	Lankadeepa (Daily) – S		
11	Ada – S		
12	Deshaya – S		
13	Sunday Lankadeepa – S		
14	Daily Mirror – E		
15	Daily FT – E		
16	Sunday Times – E		
17	Divaina (Daily) – S		
18	The Island – E		
19	Sunday Divaina – S		
20	Sunday Island – E		
21	Aruna (Daily) – S		
22	Sunday Aruna – S		
23	Sunday Morning – E		
24	Ravaya – S		
25	Veerakesari – T		
26	Metro News – T		
27	Udaya Sooriyan – T		
28	Lanka – S		