

Airwaves Scorecard

**Report of the Broadcast Media Coverage of the
Political Transition Programme.**



February 1999

**... promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom of
expression in Nigeria.**

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PREFACE

This report is the second in the series of the Broadcast Monitoring Project being conducted by Media Rights Agenda (MRA), a non governmental organisation established for the purpose of promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria.

The aims are to examine the extent of fairness exhibited by the broadcast media in giving each political party free, equal and uninhibited access to air their views regardless of the role such party or individual might have played in previous dispensations.

This is especially important because of the invaluable role the media can play in helping to enthrone and sustain functional democracy, mostly by giving the electorate opportunities to appropriately familiarise themselves with the political process, actors and issues.

This enables citizens make informed choices whenever they enter a polling booth to perform their civic duty.

It examines also how the Government acts to ensure free media access to political news sources and protect the media from harassment.

Readers will notice that we have in this report, omitted a substantial part of our first report, especially in the areas of introduction, general consideration and assessing the government. This is because the status quo has remained.

However, we have retained substantially the areas regarding the legal boundaries of election report in Nigeria and objectives of the exercise.

We have here also, provided detailed background on the broadcast stations monitored. This is with a view to providing readers further insight into why a broadcast station may have reported the way it did on the transition process.

This report focuses on the coverage of the political programme by four television stations and two radio stations.

All in all, readers, we believe, will find the content of this publication quite interesting and educative.

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This report was written by Josephine Izuagie, Co-ordinator of the Broadcast Monitoring Project, and Osaro Odemwingie, Publications Officer for MRA. Bunmi Oke provided secretarial services for the project.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This is the second report of the Broadcast Monitoring Project of Media Rights Agenda (MRA).

It is based on the monitoring of selected broadcast media to assess the coverage of political issues during the period between January 1 and January 31, 1999.

This report focuses on the coverage of the political programme by four television and two radio stations.

The Television stations are:

1. The Federal Government owned Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) in Abuja.
2. The Federal Government owned Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) in Kaduna.
3. Private-owned African Independent Television (AIT) in Lagos.
4. MiNAJ Systems Television, a privately owned station in Obosi, Anambra State.

The Radio stations are:

1. The Federal Government-owned Radio Nigeria in Abuja
2. Ray Power 100.5 F.M, a privately owned station in Lagos.

(a) BASIS OF MONITORING EXERCISE

A full discussion of this can be found in the pilot report published in January 1999. But suffice it to say that the basis of media monitoring and report on electoral exercise is founded on a variety of regional and international human rights instruments as well as a moral obligation. Both ensure that citizens make informed choices whenever they enter a polling booth.

We established also that in certain instances limitations on these rights of the media to monitor and report on the transition have been approved in some cases to maintain public order, protect privacy or ban communications that would promote religious, racial or national hatred.

It is upon this sturdy foundation that the right to be informed and to hold and impart opinions during an election campaign is built.

(b) FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

A full discuss can also be found in the pilot report. But suffice it to say also that the point was made that an essential part of any functioning democracy, is the mass media; pluralistic and unrestrained. What is implied is that, Functional Democracy is best enhanced when all contesting points of views are being fairly and equitably communicated so that the people may make informed choices.

Specifically, it was noted that, indeed, the prime place of Television and Radio as medium of political mobilisation is incontestable. While the television with its visual effect can create the most potent awareness and emotion, the radio is especially important in a country such as ours where illiteracy is high, where newspapers do not circulate beyond major towns and where television is not widely available because of poor electricity supplies and the high cost of television set.

Even in the poorest of countries, most rural families will have access to portable radios and have sufficient funds to buy batteries.

(c) LEGAL BOUNDARIES OF ELECTION REPORTING IN NIGERIA
Broadcast Media

The domestic legislation and other provisions, which regulate the coverage of elections and politics, are directed principally at the broadcast media. This is, perhaps, understandable, considering the widely held view that radio and television remain the most effective means of mass communication in Africa having regard to the high level of poverty and illiteracy.

The Political Parties (Registration and Activities) Decree No. 35 of 1998 gives radio and television the function of assisting members of the public in partaking of all ideas, ideals and experiences that help them live in a society that is humane and democratic. It requires that such radio and television programmes should influence members of the public to make living in society orderly and disciplined.

Under the Decree, radio and television are also to assist and sensitize Nigerians in making the right political choices, which will help in bringing into being a good and accountable government.

Other functions of radio and television under the Decree include: to foster political awareness among the political parties in Nigeria; to enlighten the public on the political provisions of the Nigerian Constitution; to promote public interest and consciousness in participatory politics; to educate Nigerians on their rights and political duties; and to encourage the evolution of broad political fronts based on national ideals and choices rather than on ethnic or other prejudices.

The Decree enjoins radio and television stations to provide a forum for competing ideas and ideals to be traded freely and publicly.

The National Broadcasting Code states the political objectives of broadcasting in Nigeria thus:

“Broadcasting shall contribute to the development of national unity and participatory democracy. Therefore, the political objectives of Broadcasting shall be to:

- (i) Create and promote political awareness amongst the people to achieve a democratic society;
- (ii) Inculcate in the people the spirit of tolerance of all shades of opinion; and
- (iii) Promote social justice based on the responsibilities and rights of the individual in society.”

The second schedule to Decree No. 35 of 1998 contains guidelines on political campaigns through electronic media. The Decree also contains guidelines for programming and debates on radio and television.

The Decree requires radio and television stations to allot time equally to political parties and candidates to market themselves. It also stipulates that the rates for commercials charged political parties should be the same.

It states that political party broadcasts should not exceed one hour per week per station, at pre-election times, or 30 minutes per week at other times. The duration of party talk is also limited to about 10 minutes, and preferably not more than 15 minutes.

The Decree stipulates that the sale of airtime like jingles should not exceed 60 seconds and that no voice of a member of staff of the radio or television station is to be used in political jingles.

The National Broadcasting Code outlines “the minimum standard to be observed by all operators of radio and television stations” in Nigeria. As part of these standards, it provides extensive guidelines for political coverage. Besides the broad parameters laid out in the preamble in this area, the guidelines also relate specifically to live coverage, news interviews and discussion programmes.

The Code contains a range of sanctions, which may be imposed on a station for any breach of the guidelines contained in it. These include the revocation of its license if it commits a serious breach of either the technical or non-technical aspects of the Code; reprimand or warning; light or heavy fine; reduction of broadcast hours or suspension of license, depending on the gravity of the offence.

The Code requires all political programmes to observe the provisions of extant Acts, Decrees and electoral laws. All stations are obliged to adhere strictly to the rules given by the electoral body.

It also provides that political party broadcasts, which it describes as programmes over which content political parties exercise control, should be only those in which the parties seek to explain their views and policies.

All political broadcasts are required to be in “decent language” and to be clearly identified as political broadcasts which should not be presented in a manner that would mislead the audience to believe that the programme is of any other character.

The Code stipulates that equal opportunity and airtime should be provided to all political parties or views, with particular regard to the amount of time and belt.

It seeks to regulate the conduct of broadcast producers by stipulating that “While a broadcast producer may interact with politicians in the course of his duties, this interaction shall not be such as to lead to the belief that he is either a member or sympathizer of any political party”

It gives every station the responsibility to produce and report the activities in the political arena in news and programmes, and requires such production to be objective and fair. Panellists must also be of comparable status.

The objective of news and programmes, under the Code, shall be to promote public discussion of political issues.

For live coverage, the Code stipulates in Paragraph 4.5 generally that live coverage of public events should be fair and balanced. But specifically, it stipulates that: “The live coverage of public events, especially of demonstrations and disturbances, shall be fair and balanced and just enough for the enlightenment of the citizenry. It shall not sensationalise or glamorise the event or exploit broadcasting’s unique advantages to the detriment of national interest and security.”

With regard to news interviews, the Code requires that all such programmes should be guided by ethical standards of journalism and imposes on the station to state during the broadcast when a news interview excludes an important or newsworthy area of the issue under discussion.

Besides, the Code states, where an interview entails an agreement to submit questions in advance or to exclude an important or newsworthy area concerning the subject, or where further developments have taken place after the recording, this should be stated at the beginning of the broadcast.

For discussion programmes, panellists are required to reflect the various viewpoints and to be of comparable status.

The Code also imposes an obligation on the station to state at the beginning of the broadcast where a discussion excludes any important or newsworthy area, or where further developments have taken place after the recording.

The Code also contains guidelines on the broadcast of political advertisements. It prohibits the commercialization of political news or coverage in the interest of fairness and balance and to prevent the monetization of political broadcasts.

It stipulates that no advertisement, including commercial news, shall be accepted in a political programme and requires the advertiser to be clearly identified in all advertisements.

The Code also stipulates that “no advertisement shall contain anything which amounts to subversion of constituted authority or compromises the unity, sovereignty and corporate existence of Nigeria as a secular state.”

(d) OBJECTIVES OF EXERCISE

The objectives remain as stated in the pilot report. Those include to monitor the coverage by the broadcast media of political and human rights issues in the run up to the presidential elections and until the transition programme comes to an end, to ascertain:

- a. What guidelines for direct access programming have been laid down by the Electoral Commission?
- b. What type of direct access programming is being aired?
- c. Are the programmes live or taped?
- d. Do the programmes include “ actuality” - recordings of the candidates in their own words and voices?
- e. Do the programmes allow candidates and parties to explain their platforms and views?
- f. Do the programmes give the voters the opportunity to form opinion about the character of each candidate, their platform and parties?
- g. Do all the parties and candidates have equal time and similar programme formats?
- h. Are the parties programmes aired at similar times during the day?
- i. Are the broadcasting slot given free of charge?
- j. If air time is paid for, can it be said that no discounts were given to specific parties?
- k. Are there arbitrary restrictions on the format of the materials?

Further, the objectives include:

- l) To provide a barometer for the broadcast media to measure their performances in reporting on human rights and political issues and undertake adjustments to bring themselves in conformity with international standards of fairness in the coverage of such issues.
- m) To publish regular reports which will draw attention to patterns of inequitable reporting, inadequacy of political coverage, and provide a framework upon which a programme of reforms in the broadcast industry can be embarked upon.
- n) To provide a basis upon which the in-coming democratically elected civilian government in Nigeria can undertake comprehensive legal and structural reforms in the regulation of broadcast stations in order to enhance the democratic process.

In summary, the project aims at identifying the ways, manner and amount of coverage the broadcast media is giving to the transition process and how disposed government is in assisting the media in this respect.

2 GENERAL CONSIDERATION FOR BROADCAST MEDIA MONITORING

As was the case with the pilot report, there are also two principal aspects that have been considered in this project. These are:

(a) Government

Considering the anxiety and suspicions of Nigerians regarding the sincerity of the military to relinquish power, analysis is made of governments' actions to determine its impartiality in conducting the political transition programme. This is specifically in relation to government's actions, or its failures, to ensure the media's right to gather and impart information.

Also considered, is the media's ability to criticise activities or inaction of the government on matters relating to the transition process, to investigate corruption bias and to operate independently of political pressures. This could be hindered by prior restraints, usually pursuant to laws on broadcasting of materials concerning certain subjects.

Lastly, government's action or inaction to reports of persecution of broadcasters / proprietors of broadcast stations, or attacks on the press for performing legitimate professional duties. In a nut-shell, how the government acts to ensure the news media's right to gather and impart information and ideas. This shall all combine to answer the objectives number "1", "11" and "14".

We shall consider these in terms of the General and Legal Environment.

(b) The Broadcast Media

Considering the role of the broadcast media in helping to ensure the enthronement and sustenance of democracy, the questions to be addressed shall be as spelt-out in the objectives. In sum total it shall address the following:

- (a) How the broadcast media acts to provide access to political parties and candidates so that they may effectively communicate with the public during the political transition process.
- (b) How the broadcast media acts to ensure fair and objective coverage of political parties and candidates in news and information reporting.
- (c) How the broadcast media acts to educate the electorate on how and why to vote.

3. ASSESSING HOW THE GOVERNMENT ACTS TO ENSURE FREE MEDIA ACCESS TO POLITICAL NEWS SOURCES AND PROTECTION FROM HARASSMENT

It is noted that the General and Legal Environment that prevailed during the month under review, were same as the month before i.e. December 1998. A reproduction of the assessment is, therefore, considered not necessary.

4 ASSESSING THE BROADCAST MEDIA AS IT ACTS TO GIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES, ENSURE FAIR COVERAGE, AND EDUCATE THE ELECTORATE ON HOW AND WHY TO VOTE.

Naturally, since the focus is on daily broadcast monitoring and is on going, there are obviously new developments to report. However, the limitations and variables established for the pilot report still remains the same. They are hereby reprinted to underscore their importance.

(a) Limitations

The period to be covered shall be six months between December 1998, to May 1999, when the transition programme is deemed to have been completed. However, this report focuses on the monitoring of the broadcast media in the month of January 1999.

In the same vein, the monitoring focuses on the registered political parties; Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People's Party (APP), and People's Democratic Party (PDP).

In order to assess the broadcast media on the above considerations, the following variables were taken into consideration.

(b) Variables

(i) Stories on Government Activities

We shall consider the stories generated from government activities, conducts and pronouncements bordering on the transition programme and how they are broadcast.

(ii) Stories on INEC

This includes stories generated from the activities of the commission through press conferences, interviews by its officials and any civic education programme sponsored by the commission.

(iii) Stories on APP, PDP and AD.

This includes stories generated from the three main political parties, individually and jointly, through press conferences, campaigns, rallies, debates, meetings and others. The length of time given each party or candidate.

(iv) Informed Commentaries

This includes programmes where political analysts are interviewed on their views about particular political issues or conduct of elections or the transition programme in general. This may also include opinion polls.

(v) Voter Education

This is aimed at programmes that educate the voters. It shall consider the use of the broadcast media to reach groups that may have traditionally lower voting patterns in order to encourage them to vote. Such programmes might be sponsored by the media organisation themselves or by INEC.

(vi) Advertisement / Direct Access

This shall include programmes sponsored by political parties or their candidates to inform the public of their programmes or intention to contest. It will also look at advertisement taken out in between some other non-political programmes.

5. ABOUT THE TELEVISION AND RADIO STATIONS MONITORED FOR THIS REPORT:

Understandably, the coverage given by a particular radio / television station to the political transition programme as a whole and the various variables listed above will most likely be a function of the economic, political and ideological bent of such a radio / television station.

This, itself, is also likely to be a function of the ownership / administrative structure of the radio / television station, target audience as well as its basic philosophy. In this wise, a few words on the ownership structure, target audience and philosophy of the radio / television monitored, is hereunder presented.

But it should be noted that being privately owned, the ownership structure of some of the radio / television station are not known for certain. What is known are all set forth below.

(i) AFRICA INDEPENDENT TELEVISION (AIT) & RAY POWER 100.5 F.M

Africa Independent Television (AIT) and Ray Power 100.5 F.M are two of the broadcast stations that were established following the 1992 deregulation of the broadcast media by the federal government. They are owned by Chief Raymond Dokpesi, of Afemai stock in Edo State.

Once into shipping, Chief Dokpesi had a stint in politics during the earlier part of the aborted General Babangida's Third Republic transition programme.

Known to be very close to some politicians, he is believed to still nurse political ambitions but is bidding his time in the main. He is, however, not unlikely to use his broadcast stations to gain some political influence and, of course, make some money, where possible.

The stations have recently gone network. Their headquarters is in Lagos and they have another office in Abuja. But they can be viewed or listen to in Aba, Kano, Abuja and, of course, some states around Abuja. They are also received in all the Yoruba speaking states of western Nigeria and the Republic of Benin. They are well funded and adequately equipped to transmit events to the public with capable and experienced hands - Broadcasters, Presenters and Producers.

Before now, AIT and Ray Power 100.5 F.M, two of the foremost independent television and radio stations, were known as an entertainment television and radio stations, because of the nature of their programmes. However, since the beginning of the transition programme, there have been a lot of changes in the programmes and programming. The stations have

become more serious in their coverage of political issues. New programmes have been introduced and old ones converted to political programmes.

(ii) MiNAJ SYSTEM TELEVISION

MiNAJ System Television is a private-owned television station situated in Obosi, Anambra State. It is owned by Chief Mike Ajegbo, a businessman, who also owns a radio station and a cable television. A law graduate from the University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University, and a graduate of the famous Harvard Business School, Boston, Massachusetts, United States, where he trained as a manager of human and material resources.

He is also the Chairman of Obosi Community Bank, Director IPTC (West Africa) Limited, Director Coral International Insurance Company limited and Bouygues Nigeria Limited.

His first foray into the political arena was as a member of the Nigerian Constituent Assembly. He was later to be a member of the General Abacha regime's National Constitutional Conference and the National Reconciliation Committee.

However, early during the month under review, Chief Ajegbo declared his intention to vie for a Senatorial seat in the state.

(iii) RADIO NIGERIA, ABUJA

The Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, otherwise known as Radio Nigeria, is the national radio of the government of the federation. It is wholly owned by the government and is supervised by the Federal Ministry of Information.

Over seventy years old, it has evolved through these years to its present five zonal structures with offices in Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna, Enugu and Abuja, its Headquarters.

Although its motto is "to uplift the nation and unite the people", like most third world government media, its editorial policy is tied to what the government of the day is doing, good or bad, whether it unites the people or not.

Because of this posture, it has lost a lot of credibility especially in the recent past when Nigeria suffered serious military dictatorship. Yet this has not detracted or completely degraded its power to propagate a view point or an individual especially as it still holds the monopoly of being the only network radio in Nigeria with powerful short-wave transmitters.

The zonal structure of the corporation confers on the zones, otherwise known as national stations, some level of autonomy, especially in the editorial and programme matters. Each zone has its own staff, correspondents, programmes etc. It only joins the network service for news and other special broadcast and programmes.

The zones correspond loosely to the geopolitical and linguistic grouping of the country. Under the Kaduna zonal station are most of the core northern states. The station is mandated to cover Kaduna, Niger, Bauchi, Plateau, Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Borno, Yobe and Katsina states.

The Ibadan zonal station is mandated to cover all the Yoruba speaking states made up of Lagos, Ondo, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti and Ogun, including Edo, Kwara, Delta and Kogi States in its programmes and news.

The Enugu zonal station covers all Igbo speaking states of Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Abia and Eboyin, including Rivers, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Cross Rivers as well as Benue States.

The Lagos zonal station is hitherto the network service. But with the movement of the seat of government to Abuja, it is for all intents and purposes now the Abuja zonal station that is now the Headquarters even though it is yet to be pronounced so. But all network programmes now originate from Abuja which has been on air since October 1980.

To understand FRCN's coverage of the transition to civil rule programme and its election, knowledge of its broadcast history is necessary.

The corporation, since Independence, has had very little experience in broadcasting in a democratic set up. Even during the periods of democratic experimentations (1960-1966 and 1979-1983), the corporation operated under a command control structure. The government in power owns it and so it ministered to the whims and caprices of that government. The issue of public trust and public ownership did not arise and does not even today.

In the African cosmology nay Nigeria, there is no word for opposition. You are either an enemy or a friend. You fight your enemy with every weapon you possess including the media you control. Nigeria's long years of military rule has brutalised the psyche of the average Nigerian and most Nigerian have become dictatorial even in their civic life. The FRCN as an institution, has not escaped this. So much so that even in a benevolent dictatorship, as Nigeria has now, the station reads the mind of government and does what it thinks the government wants. It is self censorship at its best and crudest form.

It would be supposed that a station that has bowed to every desire of government would be well funded and adequately equipped. Paradoxically, the contrary is the case. It is perhaps the most backward station of its size and status in Africa especially in the area of technical know-how.

Hence, some of the lapses that may be found in its coverage of the political transition programme, will not be as a result of deliberate policies, but pure technical inadequacy to reach where the events took place, source for the message and put it out to the public. It could have fine ideas but not the know-how to implement it.

Presently, what it calls the network service is a studio in Abuja with telephone lines linking all the zonal stations. The news is produced in Abuja and read in that studio. It has to be carried by telephone lines to short-wave transmitters in Kaduna, Ibadan and Enugu. There is no short wave transmitter in Abuja.

The network service does not run programmes, it only opens at 7.00am to read the news and shuts down. It opens again at 4.00pm, 7.00pm and 10.00pm for the news and shuts down afterwards, everyday. Hence, it broadcasts two hours of news everyday.

During this transition programme, it introduced a 15 minutes political education program called “Platform” which runs on Mondays and Thursdays at 7.30pm.

But the real culprit in the corporations’ ineptitude in covering the elections is Commercialisation.

Commercialisation came on stream in 1987, as a result of dwindling revenue from government. It was supposed to be a partial commercialisation of the operation of the corporation. But today, there are no dividing lines. All programmes and every airtime is sold to the highest bidder. News is sold. Investigations reveal that the radio’s airtime often given persons and corporate bodies is paid for. A political jingle on the network service would cost about N90,000 per minute.

No government agency or parastatal is spared of Radio Nigeria’s mercantilism, except that agency has a direct influence to its capital expenditure subvention which still comes from government.

Perhaps the real problem is the inability or refusal of the operators of such a public trust as Radio Nigeria to distinguish between what is social, what is information, what is for public good and what is commercial or is not commercial.

But the government itself does not feel perturbed at this state of affairs; neither does it see a need to right the anomaly. It has failed to provide an appropriate guideline that takes into consideration the social responsibility of the medium.

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) has tried to instill some sense of social responsibility on the corporation, especially as it relates to election broadcasts. It directed that all political broadcasts should be free and all parties given equal access to the media. Unfortunately, the NBC has no control over the FRCN whatsoever. In defiance of the NBC directive, the Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria (BON), met and fixed rates for political broadcasts.

Also, presently, the station is a bit timid, a bit too sensitive and afraid to place any foot wrong bearing in mind its recent heinous past when it so vociferously campaigned for the self-succession bid of late head of state. It is treading softly and in the process, it is bungling.

The above serve as a background and reasons for what might be observed as the political transition broadcast in the network service of the FRCN.

(iv) NIGERIAN TELEVISION AUTHORITY (NTA), ABUJA

The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Abuja, is a government-owned broadcast medium. It is the headquarters of the long chain of NTA stations that are all over the country. They are all under the Ministry of Information and have an overall boss with the designation of Director-General.

It is note worthy to observe that the history of NTA has been one of propaganda for any government in power. What is said of FRCN can also be said of NTA especially as it relates to its attitude to reporting government and its activities. It has similarly met with credibility problem for reason of its no-hold barrel support for any government in power

especially the regime of late General Sani Abacha.

Each station has at its head, a director. It is also has its programme schedule in the main . All the stations, however, usually link-up for network programmes, including the 9.00pm daily network news.

NTA Abuja, aside from network political programmes, did not have its own political programmes during the month under review. It featured, as did most of the other NTA stations, only network service political programmes. This situation made the majority of NTA Abuja political broadcast, quite uninteresting as viewers did not have the opportunity to watch aspirants to their immediate political offices and assess them before elections.

(v) NIGERIAN TELEVISION AUTHORITY, KADUNA

On March 25, 1962, the first Premier of the Northern Region, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, opened the Broadcasting Corporation of Nigeria (BCN). Under the umbrella of the BCN, Radio, Television of Kaduna (RTK) started broadcasting.

The station was set up essentially to counter the “negative” and “hostile” posture of the Southern press, as opposed too an infinite belief in the socio-political importance of broadcast stations in themselves.

This agenda was firmly pursued until 1977, during General Obasanjo’s regime, the federal government took over the television section, thus becoming Nigerian Television Authority.

6. PRESENTATION OF RESULT OF THE BROADCAST MEDIA MONITORING FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY, 1999.

(I) Radio Nigeria, Abuja

Coverage of political stories by the FRCN, a government-owned network radio station, in January, started with the story of an alliance between the APP and the AD. The leaders of the two parties, the National Chairman of AD, Chief Ayo Adebajo, and the National Secretary of APP, Dr. Josiah Odunna, said modalities for the alliance were being worked out. Also featured in the bulletin was the National Publicity Secretary of the rival party, the PDP, Mr. Sam Shango, who described the alliance as a conspiracy.

Also in the bulletin was the story of INEC’s screening of candidates for the House of Assembly and Gubernatorial election in Anambra State.

Throughout the next four days, all political stories were on screening of candidates for the January 9 election and some voter education jingle by INEC.

On January 4, “Platform” devoted its whole 15 minutes slot to the APP/AD alliance. The programme was aired at 7.30pm.

Between January 5 and 9, stories centred on screening, preparation for the elections and promotional jingle in the network service by the PDP and the APP.

The coverage of the activities of the parties was skewed in favour of the PDP.

No mention was made of the APP and AD for two days to a crucial election. Perhaps the PDP paid for the coverage.

From January 9, there were reports on the elections; its conduct and collation of results. On the 10th there was a live programme which lasted for two hours. It dealt with situation reports in the states and gave results already authenticated by the INEC.

By the 12th, the results were all out and Governors-elect were speaking on their programmes on assumption of office. The Niger State Governor-elect, Engr. Abdulkadir Kure, (PDP), said he would restore public confidence and respect in the Civil Service. Governors-elect continued to speak on their programmes. But curiously, most of those featured were of the PDP.

The station reported on January 12, that INEC announced that PDP won 19 States, APP, 9, and AD 6. FRCN's news bulletin continued to feature Governors-elect and their programmes up till January 16.

INEC Chairman Justice Ephraim Akpata, was reportedly satisfied with the election. Also the Chairman of APP, Senator Mahmud Waziri, said he was satisfied with the showing of his party.

It was reported on the 12th that former Senate President Dr Joseph Wayas and Mr. Andrew Shawa both of the APP, declared their intention to contest the presidential election.

Also, there was a report of Don Etiebet of the PDP declaring his intention to vie for the presidency. PDP's fund raising project was also in the news. The rescheduled Rivers State election result was also in the news.

The visit of Emeka Anyaoku, Commonwealth Secretary General was extensively featured in the news bulletins as well as in the political programme 'Platform'. This was the period of Ed-Filtri holidays between January 17 and 19. During this period, more Governors-elect spoke on their programmes, among them was that of Cross River State, Mr. Donald Duke.

Electioneering campaign by presidential aspirants became intense from January 19. Dr Edet Amana of the APP was reported to be touring Kogi and Edo States. Former Vice President Dr. Alex Ekwueme was reported to be in Gombe State campaigning. Former House of Representatives speaker, Chief Edwin Umezoke was also reported to have declared his intention to contest the presidential election and as well, the Chief of Naval Staff also pledged government commitment to the transition programme.

"Platform" of January 20, aired at 7.30pm, featured INEC Chairman's release of the guidelines for the presidential elections. That same day, a former minister in the First Republic, Chief T.O.S. Benson, praised the head of state for his efforts at democratising the country. He advised politicians to be sportsmanly.

PDP's Publicity Secretary Dr. Amette Okon, also spoke of the forth coming World Press Conference by the chairman of the party. Focus was heavy on the presidential election guidelines as well as preparation for the suspended election in Bayelsa State.

On January 21, the station reported the announcement by INEC's chairman of an extension of the time for the submission of list of candidates for the Presidential and National Assembly Elections.

On the 22nd, it was reported that former US President, Jimmy Carter, had praised the transition programme and pledged the Center Foundation's support for future elections. He also denied that he was interested in any particular candidate.

A civic education programme was broadcast on the 23rd. It featured a panel discussion on the type of leaders parties should present to the electorate. Prof. Amdi, Deen of Social Sciences of the University of Abuja, advised that the future president must be a de-tribalised Nigerian. Also in the bulletin, Chief Richard Akinjide of PDP, declared his intention to vie for the presidency. Further declarations for the presidential election by Dr Ezeife; AD, Graham-Douglas; PDP and Chief Jim Nwobodo's press briefing, prominently featured between January 24 and 27.

Visits by Governors-elect to their States Administrators were the vogue during this period up till the 31st when Governors-elect of Plateau, Imo and Anambra States called on their respective States Military Administrators.

(ii) Nigerian Television Authority, Kaduna

For the month of January, NTA Kaduna had two political programmes, "Enduring Polity and "Face the State". The former was introduced close to the governorship election, to allow voters an opportunity to "see" the candidates, know their manifestoes and form an opinion on whom to vote in as governor and members of the state house of assembly.

"Face the State" is seen as the state's NTA version of Network's "Face the Nation".

In the edition aired before the January 9, Governorship and House of Assembly elections, the three Gubernatorial candidates from the three parties were invited to face the people of Kaduna State.

The Anchor-man, Ibrahim Damisa, started off by introducing the AD candidate, Colonel Jaffar Njam, then Honourable Sulaiman Zuntu of APP, and Alhaji Ahmed Markafi of PDP, so as to maintain the alphabetical order.

Each candidate was given five minutes to speak on his plans for the state if elected governor. The panel of interviewers were made up of journalists and public affairs analysts and questions asked ranged from issues on finance, to oil and justice.

Although there were political party supporters in the studio, they were not allowed to ask questions. This seemed fair and a way of avoiding the programme turning into a partisan programme. Participation of viewers was, however, excluded as there were no phone calls allowed.

The programme was well monitored by the Anchor-man and the members of the panel who, noticeably, did not ask questions that were seemingly confrontational or intended to upset any of the candidates.

Candidates also presented their cases well, with clarity, each trying to convince voters that he was the best choice.

"Enduring Polity", a weekly one-hour programme can be classified as a civic education programme.

In one of its editions during the month under review, it examined the preparation of parties towards the National House of Assembly election. Questions were asked on how the parties were conducting their primaries and the process being adopted.

The presenter spoke with the State's Public Relation Officer for APP, Mallam Abdul Azeez and the Administrative Secretary of AD in the state, Joseph Tony.

Both officials of the two parties were featured while speaking with the presenter and they were asked similar questions.

The presenter, however, explained that when he tried to contact PDP officials to get their own views, none of them was available, but picture of the party's state secretariat was shown. Also interviewed was the state's Resident Electoral Commissioner, Professor Abdul Hamid Kudjo.

In the same edition, the number of and zonal structures of presidential aspirants within the parties were also examined. It was noted that PDP had the highest number of aspirants from the South/South Zone.

The programme made use of a lot of visuals, as party offices were featured, party officials who were spoken to were also shown and pictures of some presidential aspirants featured.

Another edition of the programme aired before the Presidential and National Houses of Assembly elections, put the number of presidential aspirants in all the parties at about 25, with PDP having the highest number.

Obasanjo's visit to Zaria, was featured in the edition and he was referred to as PDP's presidential aspirant. He was shown with the Emir of Zaria condoling the emir and the people of the town on their citizens who were electrocuted. However, from the clippings shown, it seemed like a campaign tour as people were singing, dancing and hailing Obasanjo. The story was given about 4 minutes with generous use of actuality and footage.

Officials of PDP and AD in Kaduna State were interviewed on their preparedness for the primaries, they were given equal air time. The presenter, however, said efforts made to get APP's officials were unsuccessful.

(iii) MiNAJ System Television, Obosi, Anambra

The local station ran only one political programme during the month under review, "Political Diary", which came up once a week. "Political Diary" started off as a sponsored programme, whereby parties and candidates, sell themselves and their manifestoes to members of the public.

Sponsors are usually given 15 minutes airtime to campaign to the viewers without interference from the station.

The programme was, however, off the air for about two weeks before resurfacing on January 12, with a remark by the presenter, Chris Udentia, that although they had "been away for quite some time, it is all in an effort to serve you (viewers) better".

The programme, indeed, wore a new look, as it kicked off with a review of the December 5 Local Government election and the January 9 Governorship and State House of Assembly elections.

The presenter was quite full of accolade for the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), which he said "proved to be a master of the game" by sweeping the polls on December 5, 1998, and January 9, this year.

The programme then switched into the campaign of Chief Ajegbo held in, according to the presenter, “his eminent home in Obosi”. The Senatorial candidate addressed the people in his local language, Igbo. It was a very colourful affair.

Out of the three “Political Diary” edition featured in the month of January, two were focused on Chief Ajegbo and one on the hosting of party members by the Governor-elect of Anambra State, Dr. Chinuoکه Mbadimeju.

At the ceremony, Dr. Mbadimeju, spoke on the party’s forthcoming primaries for the State House of Assembly.

MiNAJ Television news broadcast can be said to be detailed with generous usage of actuality/footage. It usually balances the number of local news stories with foreign ones.

For the month of January, the station broadcast about 387 news items, out of which 218 were local stories and the remaining 169, foreign .

There were 81 political news items out of the 218 local news. Out of the 81 political news items, 16 items were related to or emanated from INEC, 31 were on PDP, six on AD and 10 on APP. The political stories generated from Government activities were 18. It should be noted that non-political but government oriented stories were about 67.

The station, meanwhile, also made some efforts to generate news stories that would educate voters, with such topics as “political analysts talk on the qualities of a good governor”. Such stories were aired about 10 items.

(iv) African Independent Television, Lagos

“Kakaki”, the early morning programme which starts by 5.00am and last till 10.00am, featured many interviews plus phone-in programme. It usually addresses general issues, but has since the political transition programme began, been focusing on political issues.

In the first week of January, Gubernatorial candidates of two political parties were interviewed. They were Alhaji Kekere Ekun of APP and Chief Dapo Sarumi of PDP who was represented by his deputy, Prince Adeniji Adele. Senator Bola Tinubu of AD had been interviewed in December.

Apart from these candidates, party chieftains and political analysts were variously presented to express their views on political issues.

On the election day, January 9, the station presented an election activity programme called ‘Polls-watch’. Elections in various states were monitored and reported. People called to air their opinions or observations on the election processes. There was also a panel of discussants who analysed the election based on the report from correspondents and callers.

“Issues in Democracy” was another programme recently introduced to give an in-depth coverage of political matters. It is aired on Wednesdays at 6.30 pm.

There is also “Democracy Today”. It is aired on Sundays at 7.30 pm. The first and second episodes of this programme after the January 9 elections were basically a repetition of “Polls-watch”, except for very few new political events included for about five minutes. The programme itself lasts for 30 minutes.

There were no other regular political programmes apart from those ones. Though occasionally, some other programmes presented some interview programme that were political. One if such is “Encounter”. Encounter is aired on Tuesdays at 10.00pm.

On the news coverage, most times, political news were absent in the headlines but present in the body of the news. Even with this, the station devotes a lot of time to political news.

“Soni Irabor Live”, a popular general interest live interview and phone-in programme, also went political during the month under review. It featured many political issues and party chieftains of the various political parties and human rights issues.

Among politicians interviewed on the programme were General Olusegun Obasanjo, a PDP presidential aspirant. Callers were, however, not allowed to ask questions freely and the anchor man couldn’t ask relevant questions concerning his platform and policies.

(v) Ray Power 100.5 F. M.

The breezy style of reporting which is the strong point of Ray Power 100.5 makes it difficult for the station to accommodate a formal and rather “serious” coverage of political news events.

During the month under review, Ray Power actually covered political transition events including the activities and pronouncements of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the numerous events on the political scene including AD/APP merger and the reactions of PDP chieftains to it, as well as the response of their listeners to political issues.

Ray Power did not provide regular headlines in their news broadcasts and this made monitoring difficult.

Furthermore, the numerous phone-in programmes such as “Bournvita Breakfast Special” aired on January 23 and 30, “Factfile” “Your Rights and Duties” and “Politics ½ Hour”, all concentrated on basically the same topics; outcome of the Gubernatorial Elections and Calibre of Presidential Aspirants.

No doubt “Factfile” could handle these topics, while “Politics ½ Hour” and “Political Update” could have focused on developments in the political scene. A situation in which Ray Power resorts to the phone-in system using many presenters and programmes make the station’s report on political issues monotonous. Political debates were not encouraged in the station. The Civic Education aspect was ably handled by Mike Aruleba. Audience participation during the programme on Saturdays is commendable. The right questions/situations are presented, right responses are given.

The programmes are so irregular that keeping a tab on them becomes difficult. Apart from making Ray Power a reference point on political issues, it would also make it easy for politicians to take the station serious, to the extent that they (politicians) will honour invitations to participate on any of the advertised political programmes.

There were no sponsored political programmes except a few adverts placed by the various political parties and politicians.

(iv) Nigerian Television Authority, Abuja

During the month of January 1999 , NTA Abuja, courtesy of the Network Service, had only one major political programme - “Face The Nation”. This is an informed commentary cum civic education programme where officials of political parties are interviewed on what their different parties have in stock for voters. Anchored by James Audu, the programme is usually quite interesting as one official tend to point out flaws in the other party’s programmes or actions while highlighting the merits in his own.

The first edition of the programme aired this month was on January 5, and it featured Ambassador Yusuf Mamman of AD, Alhaji, Tundun-Wada of APP, and Professor Jerry Gana of PDP. They were announced in alphabetical order, thereby removing any element of bias that might otherwise, have been imputed.

Each official was given five minutes at the beginning of the programme to sell his party to the viewers. The Anchor-man started off with AD (still in alphabetical order) who spoke about the party's programmes for genuine democracy and transparent governance.

The anchor man then called on APP's official, but stressed or pointed out thus: "Here we want realism and reality. What should we expect, because we the Nigerians will hold you responsible for what you say here today".

The APP's official used the opportunity to tell viewers of his party's intention to put to lie the military government's claim in 1983, that politicians in the country had failed. The PDP's official used his opportunity to describe his party as "people friendly".

The programme also entertained phone calls by viewers which were well directed by the anchor-man.

The second and third edition of the programme went quite the same way with the parties represented by some other officials. The second edition of January 12, however, had the same officials for AD and PDP, but a different one - Mr. Segun Oyefule - for APP.

The anchor man, warned the parties representatives that the programme was not a debate and should, therefore, not flow into one, pointing out that it was just an opportunity "for participants to tell viewers about their parties". The participants, however, went into a debate when they were responding to a phone call from a viewer. But this was for a very short time.

The January 19, edition was, however, a debate between Dr. Las Anyanwa of AD and Senator Aniete Okon of PDP, as APP's representative was absent and the phones were not functioning. It was quite a hard task for the anchor-man to get the gentlemen to keep in line with the programme's focus. Dr. Anyanwa of AD tried to make a case for his party and the APP, while Senator Okon tried to ridicule the alliance between the two parties.

Some invectives like "befuddled," "don't heckle", were directed at the AD official by the PDP official. The intervention of the moderator, however, stopped what might have degenerated into an ugly situation. The same edition was aired on January 26.

The Network news broadcast of January 8, a day before the Governorship and States Houses of Assembly elections, was filled with reports on final preparations for the elections. It was a very extensive report which was quite fair as it cut across the country, highlighting INEC's and State Administrators' readiness for the election. Some of the reports were, however, without visuals.

The broadcast catered for educating the voters as it relayed INEC's regulation on the election process. The news was also relayed in Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa.

On January 9, the Network news broadcast was titled "Nigerians Decide" and aired correspondents' reports from several states on the conduct of the elections. The Decree on the elections was also featured so as to enlighten the viewers on what to expect from their candidates. The Niger State correspondent who interviewed APP and PDP governorship candidates did not explain the absence of the AD candidate

A second edition of “Nigerians Decide” was not as detailed as the first one as some of the correspondents did not mention the names of all the candidates in their states.

Analysis of the parties’ performance was by a panel made up of the Dean of Social Sciences, University of Abuja, Prof. Sam Amdi, Dr. James Obiegbu of the same University and a policy analyst, Mr. Theclore Mayaki.

Members of the panel made honest and objective analysis of the parties and their performances in the elections.

The producer was also careful not to bring any politician as part of the panel of discussants.

Most of the analysts agreed on the point that the AD was stagnant as it did not seem to have made any progress on its last performance in the local government election, pointing out that it still won the same number of states. They advised that the party should endeavour to make an incursion into other states, so as to have a wider spread.

Some viewers who phoned in, however, seemed to resent the remarks on AD and tried to defend the party, but their anger was misplaced as it was plain that the remarks of the panellists were made in good faith.

The moderator had quite a task explaining to the viewers that the panellists were not against the AD, but merely made their observations and suggestions on how to redress the situation.

7. ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the disparities in the attention accorded political reporting by the various broadcast media monitored, a station by station analysis is carried out hereunder.

(i) Analysis

(i) Radio Nigeria, Abuja

Given its present operational set up, the FRCN network service had 62 hours of news broadcast and six hours of special political programmes for the month of January 1999. This is made up of a 30 minutes news broadcast four times a day; 7.00am, 4.00pm, 7.00pm, 10.00pm, a 15 minutes political programme “Platform” broadcast twice a week, and special two hours broadcast on election day, January 9.

A 30 minutes news slot which is the standard for the network service, contain an average of eight items of news (that is about 4 minutes per item). The 62 hours of news broadcast in January contained 1056 items of news.

Out of these 1056 items of news, 120 items pertained to elections and the transition to civil rule programme. This is roughly eight hours of the 62 hours of Network News broadcast for January. This approximate to 13.3% of the broadcast hours for January.

Of these 120 items, 51 items were election activity news stories like preparations for elections, screening of candidates. INEC activities and government officials’ statements on election and the transition programme etc., consisted another 35 items, while civic education and mobilising the electorate for participation in the elections constituted another 21 items. Activities related to campaigns and presentation of party/individual manifestoes amounted to 13 items of news.

Of the eight hours of political news broadcast for January, we find that election activities and Government officials' statements, took six hours of broadcast hours (51+35= 86 items x 4 minutes per items) leaving only two hours or three per cent for Civic/Voter Education programme and campaign related activities.

For an emerging democracy and a country in transition, more so where literacy rate is less than 50 per cent, this is hardly adequate.

Furthermore, it was observed that the station was rather pro-PDP in its broadcast.

(ii) Nigerian Television Authority, Abuja

The station did not have much to report on the political transition process during the month under review. For the little it reported, it was decidedly circumspect apparently because it does not want to embarrass the government.

However, it must be noted that some of its reports while mentioning names of some party chieftains, would omit those of other parties. This may imply bias, but may not be intentional. Maybe the names were cut off in a bid to edit the length of the stories. But maybe this is not an acceptable excuse and is considered quite unprofessional. The standards used in the reports were also not evenly applied as some correspondents interviewed some aspirants and others did not.

The statement by the anchor-man of "Face the Nation" referred to above could be seen in different ways by viewers. He did not give such a "warning" to AD official, why leave it till it was the turn of APP before making such a statement. Was it that he felt that Ambassador Mamman's remarks were not "real" or he expected APP official to colour the truth.

It might, however, have been an innocent remark or the anchor-man might have forgotten to give that caution before Mamman made his remarks and decided to mention it later. But he may have left some negative impressions in the minds of viewers.

The anchor-man must be commended for the maturity with which he handled viewers' reaction to the comment on AD which some viewers considered unfavourable to the party. But it should be noted that the statement was not made in a manner to put down the party, but rather to encourage it.

However, it must be pointed out that for a station operating in a country transitioning to democracy, the number of political stories on its news during the month under review, leaves a lot to be desired. One would expect that most of the news broadcast would be political stories. Also, it would have been expected that the station have political programmes of its own.

(iii) Nigerian Television Authority, Kaduna

The station must be commended for introducing its own version of "Face the Nation" as amply shown by its "Face the State". This programme greatly assisted the station towards fulfilling its statutory obligation of informing the mass of its viewers on relevant aspects of the transition programme.

It also afforded voters the opportunities to "meet" the candidates at the various elections. In fact, most commendable is the five minutes each guest was given to talk about their parties, programmes and position on burning national issues.

It is, however, observed that the PDP got more favourable number of mentions compared to other parties. Specifically, General Olusegun Obasanjo, a PDP presidential aspirant, got more positive mentions than other politicians. Thus implying bias.

(iv) MiNAJ System Television, Obosi, Anambra State

The main news broadcast of the station is at 7.30p.m daily and runs for 30 minutes. Usually, in a place like Anambra State, most people are in their homes before 7.30p.m. each day. Thus this is quite a good timing for the news.

The station's coverage of the election was very extensive, as the station monitored most of the states in the country with much usage of actuality and footage. The results were also announced as soon as they were released by INEC. The news crew is also commended for bringing on the spot stories within the station's locality to its viewers .

There was, however, a slow start in the coverage of political stories during the month under review considering that the election was conducted very early in the month. On the average, there was more usage of political stories after the election, than before the election.

Most of the governorship candidates were not interviewed, as one would have expected. Even on January 6, barely 72 hours to the elections, only the Electoral Commissioner of Enugu State was interviewed on the preparedness of INEC. The following day, his Anambra State counterpart was interviewed.

In some news stories, there were noticed efforts to balance reports by speaking with officials of all the three parties. During the January 9 Elections, officials of the three parties in Anambra, Edo and Delta State spoke on the reasons for the low turnout of voters. And during the primaries for Governorship and States House of Assembly, all the parties were featured, although PDP was given more air time than other parties.

On some days, all the political news reports in a broadcast were usually on PDP, while the station was silent on other parties. The news stories in reference were mostly favourable to the party, PDP.

The entrance of MiNAJ's owner, Chief Ajegbo, into politics on the platform of PDP, also obviously affected the tilt of the news stories and political programmes in favour of PDP.

The station that hardly repeats a news item except election results, repeated, several times Chief Ajegbo's denial that he stepped down for another candidate before the Senatorial elections. The news item was aired on two consecutive days.

The Chief Executive and Chairman of MiNAJ Group used the station to his advantage especially in getting news about his campaign activities across to voters. He was mostly described with favourable adjectives such as "prominent media guru" and "foremost senatorial aspirant". Only his advertisement were aired during the news broadcast daily. It was not possible to ascertain if other contestants were deliberately denied the use of his broadcast station.

It was also noticed that apart from the news broadcast and the sponsored programme, "Political Dairy", there was no other programme whereby the public were educated especially in the native language. Such would have prevented the situation when some people were interviewed on January 8, a day before the Governorship and States' Houses of Assembly elections, on the parties contesting, some claimed to know of only PRP and A.A. - no full meaning given. Others said SDP, while some opted for NRC.

It should be noted that a few other disturbing trends were noticed in the station's broadcast. For example, even though crucial elections were held in the month of January, there were some days that no political item was included in the news broadcast.

But MiNAJ Television must be commended for its efforts to educate its viewers, or rather inform them about their political environment by including enlightened news items on the broadcast, which were usually generated by the station. They afforded viewers opportunities to know, for instance, more about the functions of a House of Assembly and, therefore, make informed choices regarding whom they vote for as a member of the house.

It was also noticed that its chief executive featured most prominently in its news and sponsored political enlightenment programme.

However, it could not readily be ascertained whether the editions were paid for. This might seem to have a touch of favouritism to some viewers, while some especially PDP members, would view it as just “giving honour to whom honour is due”.

(v) African Independent Television, Lagos

The station must be commended for the devotion of its airtime to political issues during the month under review. As noted above, new political programmes were introduced to specifically take care of political reporting during this transition process. Also, most of its other programmes paid significant attention to political matters.

However, a few observation can be made relative concerning the timing of some of the political programmes referred to above. For example, considering the importance of such a programme as “Issues in Democracy” the timing is considered wrong. This is because most people who would benefit from the programme were either in their offices or on their way home during the broadcast time of 6.30p.m considering the traffic situation in Lagos.

Conclusively, AIT was quite informative and educative with its coverage and presentation of political issues during the month under review.

(vi) Ray Power 100.5 F.M

Like its sister station, AIT, Ray Power also devoted much of its airtime to political news reporting during the month under review. It also carried over the political programmes it introduced at the beginning of the political transition programme.

However, it must be pointed out that the station has a penchant for burying serious political stories in their news bulletins. A good case is the 4.00pm news panorama tagged “News Express”. A listener must be careful and patient enough else he/she will miss topical political issues.

There were also days in which political stories did not feature in their news bulletin as well as days in which political news stories were repeated. Such days in which political stories did not feature in the news bulletin were noticed on January 21, and January 26.

Even programmes such as “Politics ½ Hour” which ought to focus on developments on the political scene, were not regular. “Political Update” which formed part of the News Express was also not regular and in many instances, the reports were too brief and focused on the AD/APP Alliance or PDP’s reaction to the Alliance.

One would have expected heavy focus on issues and activities such as campaigns and pronouncements of Governorship and House of Assembly aspirants and as well, Presidential and Federal Houses of Assembly aspirants. In fact, throughout the month of January, no House Representative or Senatorial aspirant featured or was discussed in any of the numerous phone-in programmes.

Perhaps due to the “infotainment” style of the station, one or two presenters got carried away once in a while and made comment that may indicate bias.

During the month under review, Mr. Ambrose Somide, while anchoring the “Bournvita Breakfast Special” programme which was discussing the calibre of presidential aspirants, made a negative comment to the effect that “people who cannot win their wards are coming forward as presidential candidates”.

Mr. Agbansuremi while acting as a political authority fielding questions on “Factfile” on January 11, which focused on the outcome of the Gubernatorial election, said that he could not understand why the defeated AD Gubernatorial candidate in Kwara State should complain simply because he (Agbansuremi) is of the conviction that Kwara State is APP’s stronghold. These statements implied bias.

However, in all, there is no pronounced bias towards any party. There were only occasional slips by presenters. Within their scope, the presenters/reporters gave the public the information as they perceived them. No attempt was made to analyse thoroughly. All one got was straight reporting. The “Factfile” segment tried to preview the situation before the audience response, but this is not enough.

(ii) Conclusion

A straight and general conclusion on the performance of the broadcast media in the month under review will not be adequate to convey the true performance of the sector for the month.

While some broadcast stations monitored performed quite remarkably, some performed below expectations. In another vein, while some of the broadcast stations considered to have performed well in some areas, the same could not be said of them in some other areas.

Thus we volunteer that AIT, Ray Power, Minaj System Television, Radio Nigeria and NTA Kaduna must be commended for their reports on the political transition process during the month of January 1999. This is especially in relation to their having the foresight to introduce and sustain some special political programmes to attend to the transition process.

This commendation, sadly, cannot be extended to NTA Abuja which did not see the need to go beyond what the Network could offer by introducing its own political programme.

This is rather unfortunate as its strategic location, the seat of power, would have made any political programme it may have had, quite useful to the main actors of the transition programme who resides there.

The Commercialisation policy of Radio Nigeria, Abuja, is also to be discouraged especially to the extent that it did not take into account the special nature of the transition programme and its invaluable role towards ensuring a success of it.

Though not very pronounced, the general pro-PDP bias exhibited by the broadcast stations is not healthy for a country of diverse political persuasion like ours.

The tendency of media owners to use their media to promote their political and economic interest is also hereby condemned.

However, a commendable use of “actuality” as well as live programme at which candidates were allowed to explain their platforms and air their views using their voices.

(iii) Recommendations

In view of the above analysis and conclusion, we, therefore, recommend as follows:

- * The Government should create a more conducive legal environment for media coverage of the transition programme by repealing all laws and decrees which inhibit the capacity of the media to report freely.

In particular, the Government should revoke its reported ban on live debates.

- * The Government should provide adequate protection for journalists and media workers against intimidation and attacks by thugs, supporters and members of political parties or candidates. The government should also investigate into all reported cases and prosecute those responsible.

- * There was a reported low turn-out of voters recorded during the January 9, Gubernatorial and States' Houses of Assembly Polls, blamed largely on lack of awareness on the part of eligible voters on the need to avail themselves of this civic duty, and where to vote. We recommend, therefore, that the broadcast media should improve significantly on their focus on Civic Education broadcasts.

Following from the above, we recommend that the government and INEC should give more attention to political enlightenment programmes in the broadcast media.

- * In view of the greater advantage of the broadcast media over its print counterpart, government can enhance greater participation, as well as stimulate more citizen's interest in the political transition programme by initiating policies that will make radio and television sets more affordable for the masses.

- * We further recommend that in order to make direct access programmes beneficial to all the parties, the stations should reduce its air time rate for sponsored political programmes and as well place a limit to which one party can sponsor such a programme.

- * We recommend that in view of the fact that broadcast media often have definable catchment areas, efforts should be made to ensure that they initiate civic education and other programmes in local languages and pidgin English.

- * We recommend that broadcast media owners should be discouraged from using their stations for political campaigns in the event that they decide to go into politics.

- * A further recommendation is that the broadcast media, rather than increase their air time rates, should reduce it to enable parties and politicians have more access to the electorate.

Error Margin

We admit an error margin of plus or minus 5 in data collection and analysis.



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