

**Fair and Equal Treatment of Candidates by the Print Media**

1. The Electoral Affairs Commission (“EAC”) will examine whether candidates are treated fairly and equally in light of the circumstances of each case. Circumstances under consideration by the EAC include but not limited to practical problems that may be experienced by publishers, such as limitation of column space and staff resources, situations when some candidates who have extensive opinions on issues of public relevance while other candidates have none, candidates who have made newsworthy statements or speeches as opposed to the other candidates who have not uttered a word, and the difference in status and standing of some candidates as public figures, etc.
2. No person is allowed to use these practical problems as an excuse, without specific explanations, for not giving fair and equal treatment and coverage to all candidates competing in the same constituency. Merely saying that practical problems gave rise to the selective reporting will be viewed as a lame excuse. However, if the print media had approached the other candidates but they refused to accept any interview, and this fact is made known by the relevant media in the same article, it will not be regarded as breaching the guidelines.
3. Equal treatment and coverage does not necessarily means using same length and word count when reporting on each candidate of the same constituency, and must be considered on a case-by-case basis. For example, where a candidate speaks more than another candidate on a topic, and the newspaper reports it truthfully and faithfully, the media should not be criticised for not providing fair reporting. In other words, the key to fairness and equality is in the sense of **equal opportunity** being given to all candidates competing in the same constituency alike, so as to help electors make informed choices.
4. If fair and equal treatment has been given for all candidates competing in the same constituency in a publication, its editorial line or the personal opinions of the writer on each of the candidates can be freely expressed, insofar as they comment fairly and based on facts. Any newspaper is at full liberty to express its support for or disapproval of a candidate. The guidelines do not seek to impose any shackle on the expression of such ideas.