

REPORT 2011

FACE OF CORRUPTION COVERAGE A Report on their Coverage





REPORT 2011

Coverage

FACE OF CORRUPTION CORRUPTION IN NEWS MEDIA A Report on their

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Foreword

Going by the way corruption is being reported in the recent months in the news media, one gets the impression that everything in India is corrupt and corruption is all over and increasing. To what extent that is so? How do we get out of that syndrome? And when?

Yes, corruption is a national problem and a serious one to be concerned about and to take on. However, perceptions alone cannot be the basis for our public policies. The high voltage coverage of corruption by news media (as brought out by this monograph), should not scare us rather it should strengthen our resolve to get at for evidence.

A recent overview (2010) of CMS India Corruption Reports has indicated that in a couple of public services there has been a decline in the extent of corruption involving citizen. If we could bring down corruption in some services, why can we not in others? This report had also hinted that perhaps "corruption is being kicked upstairs" as in the case of telecom. This study also indicates that the initiatives at different levels of operations in public services have brought in this decline of corruption in some of the services. However, there was no coverage in the news media of such a trend. Seemingly, what matters for news media is the increase in corruption. The reporting model of news media seems to be such that the more the reporting on corruption, the more it gets reported in the same direction. That is how corruption is "fancied next to sex" as "a super fire subject to grab attention" as Mr.NVittal wrote in his Foreword for the 2010 monograph.

There are not many instances of reports to do with systemic nature that could also offer insights for correctives. While there is ample evidence of RTI effect on corruption reporting in the news media, there are hardly any reports to flag an important clause of that Act (Section 4) suo-moto provision as it is not being implemented despite budgetary allocation for networks and software technologies which are essential for expediting the regime of transparency.

Reporting scams and the like in the media and debates in our legislatures need to acquire different flavor so that we get out of the tunnel of corruption that we are all in. Another CMS report on corruption had also brought out that "mother of all corruptions" in the country is "note for vote" (2009) and that without taking up that issue, can we curb corruption at other levels? News media reports should help us find the light to get out of the tunnel as well. For such a coverage they must gear up with a different model of reporting so that we do not continue to be in a fix or coma. News media should report experiences of people – not mostly perceptions, but systemic aspects, not leader centric but citizen concerned. The next monograph for 2012 hopefully would signal that we are on road to that threshold.

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September 26, 2011

Preface

Reporting on corruption in news media between the year 2010 and 2011 has doubled. However, during July — September of 2011 alone the coverage more than tripled. As I mentioned in the preface for the 2010 monograph, "media coverage helps create public pressure against corruption but it should also help bring down corruption in the country". Since the Anna Hazare crusade, there are initiatives all around and all across the states towards curb, contain corruption and the compulsions. With the kind of spread of e-seva and e-governance services, and transparency movement gaining ground, hopefully news media would take up reporting these in 2012 and expedite the process of decline of corruption.

Thanks to RTI, news media is once again appreciated recently for tracing and exposing "conflict of interest" issues, however limited that may be. Now that news media has put corruption on the top of the agenda, it should chase successes in bringing corruption down, showcase and help the country get out of the malice much faster. But at the same time, this role should not be solely that of media. Rather, it should be that of people, as voters and citizens. News media should uphold itself in this process as the Fourth Estate.

This monograph, based on CMS Media Lab study, is with the hope that it enables news media take on to a "different approach" in its coverage of corruption to make people pro-active. This coverage should be such that it also helps "prevent" scams.

"Face of Corruption in News Media" itself should be a signal for a more optimistic India.

September 28, 2011 P N Vasanti Director, CMS

Summary

This CMS Media Lab study for January – June 2011 involves analysis of primetime (7–11 pm) coverage of corruption by news media. It included front pages of six newspapers (3 English and 3 Hindi), six news channels (4 Hindi and 2 English) and AIR news. A similar study with same scope was conducted in 2010 and a monograph was released in September 2010 with a Foreword by Shri. N Vittal, former Chief Vigilance Commissioner of India. Highlights of 2011 study are presented here. Considering the important role television plays, the analysis is given for news channels.

Anna Hazare tornado, noticed in March, surfaced first in April and spread into a national movement by August 2011. No review of news media coverage of corruption in 2011 could be without taking note of that hurricane phenomena. A comparison of the way news media covered corruption in three different periods (January, April and August 2011) brings out how Anna crusade gained ground and spread across with "saturated coverage". But this special analysis also brings out that most of that coverage however, could not be considered as about or against corruption, as in the case of other coverage of corruption analyzed in this study.

The extent of corruption covered in news media doubled in 2010. But the increase has been marked since 2009. In the last five years, corruption has become a priority of news media. It was less than one percent in 2005 /2008. In 2011, it was well over eight percent of prime time and six percent of front pages. But on days of Anna's fast that coverage overall went up to over 60 percent of prime time of news channels and mostly live coverage.

Highlights

This 2011 monograph confirms that, despite increase in the coverage, "petty corruption involving vulnerable sections of people" are yet to become a concern of news media. The priority is for scams and scandals rather than for systematic issues and correctives that need to be pursued. The far off and grassroots level corruption hardly figured.

Most of the corruption covered in 2011 involved individuals, but with high profiles and of high scams. English channels focused relatively more – both on institutions and individuals; while Hindi news channels focused relatively more on individuals in their coverage of corruption.

In covering corruption the focus of news media hitherto has been primarily Government, bureaucrats and politicians. But 2011 signaled that corporate / private sector too matters for news media and they were no longer out of bounds from their coverage. Although, overall,

only 15 percent was to do with corruption in corporates, or private sector, some channels (Aaj Tak -36%, Star News – 25%) had devoted a quarter or more. NDTV 24x7 and CNN-IBN had much less than ten percent of their coverage of corruption to do with private sector which was lower than even DD News (12 percent).

The news channels focused more on scams referring to politicians and bureaucrats and to big public utilities / services (like CWG, DGCA, GNDA, etc). CNN-IBN had only 21 percent for covering such corruption against as high 90 percent of Aaj Tak and 81 percent by Star News. Even DD News had 42 percent coverage to do with corruption involving or referring to bureaucrats. In all, major stories covered by news media were analysed. By and large they were all chasing the same stories, and even same way.

Seven Stories Dominated

Seven scandals were more oftenly reported stories of news media – channels, newspapers and radio – during the period of the study. But they accounted for little over half of all corruption coverage. Of these, four were to do with Government (2G, CWG, Adarsh, Bofors), two were to do with civil society (Ramdev and Anna Hazare) and two (Hasan Ali and Citi Bank) were from private / corporate. There were other corruption stories reported but covered less often (like Ex CJI K G Balakrishnan, Ex CM Karnataka Yeddyurappa) and some once or twice (Pawan Bansal shop scam, Sugar scam in Maharashtra). Anna's fasts do not fall under a "scam" but were to do with corruption although not all that covered. There is a distinct difference in the way various news media covered various corruption stories.

News Channels: 2G scam mattered much more for English news channels; Anna's fast mattered much more for Star News (Times Now was not included) but not as much for NDTV 24x7. Hasan Ali mattered more for Star News and CNN-IBN, Adarsh Society was covered relatively more by Zee News and NDTV 24x7 during the period (than the other news channels covered in this study). Zee News was more after 2G and CWG, Star News covered Anna and 2G more; CNN-IBN and NDTV 24x7 covered more 2G and Anna. Interestingly, Aaj Tak covered relatively less all the seven scams.

Corruption in public utilities mattered news media less than in the case of bureaucrats. In fact, Aaj Tak and Star News covered corruption in public utilities relatively much less than five percent against 51 percent by CNN-IBN and 31 percent by DD News. Interestingly, corruption in corporate / private sector is no longer ignored by news media. In fact, in 2011 news media covered corruption involving them much more than in the earlier years.

Corruption in big bodies (like CWG, DGCA, GNDA, etc) did not get much attention in Aaj

Tak (less than 10 percent), but for NDTV 24x7 (29 percent) and CNN-IBN (27 percent) that mattered relatively more.

Front page of news dailies (for two months- January and June): 2 G was covered much more by Hindustan Times and Times of India than the other four dailies. Where as Ramdev mattered much more relatively for the three Hindi dailies; Citi Bank scam figured more in Hindustan Times and Dainik Jagran than in other dailies. Hindustan Times, The Hindu, Dainik Bhaskar and Hindustan covered relatively more Ramdev than any other story during the period. Dainik Jagran covered more CWG than any of the other scams. But, over all, Hindi dailies front paged Ramdev more times and devoted far more space than English dailies. Times of India devoted least space for Ramdev. Anna was given more coverage by front pages of Hindustan and Hindustan Times, even in Jan and June (when he was not on fast)

AIR news (for January and June): For prime time news bulletin of AIR, 2G figured more times, but it spent twice more time on news bulletin of CWG scam(s). Ramdev and Anna figured to the same extent. Over all, not surprisingly, AIR news bulletins have not given as much coverage to the seven scams as the other news media during the period. The concern in this study being "corruption", not all of Anna's coverage was considered for this analysis.

Comparing the Coverage

By and large, the nature of coverage of corruption by news media in 2010 and 2011 remained same in terms of scope and structure of news. But with regard to the trend in covering corruption involving or referring individuals and institutions, it has reversed. The focus in 2010 was more on institutions, whereas in 2011 it was individualised.

Also, compared to 2010, the coverage of corruption in 2011 has become a "regular feature" for news media; no longer had special efforts to be put in to chase corruption stories. Also, in 2011 the coverage of bureaucracy was relatively more than in 2010.

Truly, news channels have provided "saturated coverage" to Anna's fasts all the 13 days at Ramlila grounds in August; Even earlier, in April at Jantar Mantar, his fast received almost ten times more coverage (all the five days) than the coverage of all the scams earlier put together. Focus of English and Hindi news media differed in the extent of covering scandals. Ramdev mattered more for Hindi news media, channels and dailies. 2G mattered much more in English news media. Anna's crusade had special (booster) effect on the news media's priorities and focus in covering corruption and scams. Whether all out coverage of Anna's crusade was also a "coercive coverage" or not could be concluded from a field study.

Corruptions in public services involving citizen continue to be far less. The civil society initiatives against corruption hardly figured in the coverage and never got acknowledged by way of encouragement or even by way of "cultivating news source". But with Anna's crusade all that has apparently changed. Anna not only infused new confidence in citizen but also reminded news media of their potential power.

Until the coverage of Anna, the focus in the coverage of news channels was not so much to provoke (instigate?) citizen for proactivisim, it was rather to enthuse and excite voters in a limited way. RTI Act is being availed by news media on their own and replies received by activists are being reported is also evident from this analysis. In 2011, News media reminded itself that "Follow ups" work and "chase" pays too. That was how coverage of scams was sustained. Competition between news media has brought in more coverage of corruption. But at the end it could be said that such a coverage provokes and works better – when it is in a collaborative mode with civil society and social media networks. This is evident the way Anna coverage evoked nationwide response.

Study Details

The news stories included in this study on corruption are about abuse of power and influence for private gain. News coverage that discussed about corruption aspects of any scams, big or small and one time or on going ones, are considered.

Scope of Study

- Study Period January to June 2011 (study period for first chart is seven years). But specific period of Anna's fast was covered
- Television: Figures are based on Prime Time (7 to 11pm) coverage by six National News Channels. The channels are Aaj Tak, DD News, Star News, Zee News, CNN IBN and NDTV 24x7.
- 3. News Dailies: Figures are percentage of front page coverage of six news dailies- Dainik Bhaskar, Hindustan, Dainik Jagran, Hindustan Times, The Time of India, The Hindu.
- 4. Radio: Figures are percentage of time devoted on corruption issues during 8:40 to 9 pm news bulletin in All India Radio.
- 5. Figures are percentage of time devoted on corruption during prime time coverage.

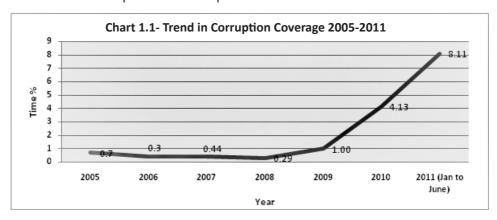
Stories on corruption in prime time (January to June 2011)

News Channels	Total Stories	Stories on Corruption
	(in numbers)	(in numbers)
Aaj Tak	5479	310
DD News	9226	547
Star News	8040	751
Zee News	6059	545
CNN IBN	5946	740
NDTV 24×7	6310	579
Subtotal	41060	3472

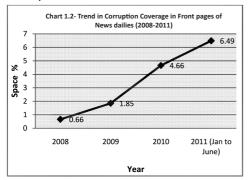
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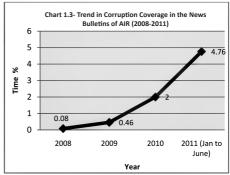
The Trend

The trend in corruption coverage in prime-time bulletins by the six television news channels during 2005 to 2011 show more than eleven times increase in percentage of time given for news stories on corruption in 2011 compared to that in 2005.



Further, the time devoted for corruption related news by television news channels has been on sharp increase since 2009.





Similar to the trend noticed in television news channels, corruption coverage on the front pages of news dailies has been on increase since 2008. Even in the case of AIR prime time news bulletins showed a steep increase in corruption coverage since 2008.

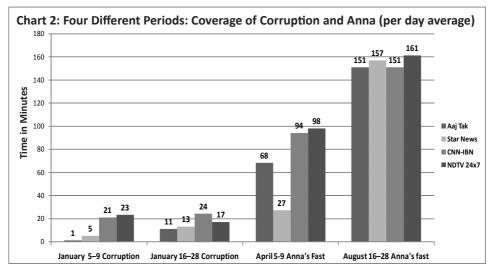
Coverage of corruption in the three prominent news media has been on increase significantly since 2009. In terms of percentage, it is relatively less in AIR news as compared to television news channels and news dailies. This is because AIR does not have an exclusive news station.

Special Coverage of Anna

Anna crusade had special effect on the way news media covered (and supported!) corruption, particularly the news channels. It was like a booster treat to corruption coverage. A special analysis of the way corruption was covered by news channels in prime time during four different time periods was conducted. The April fast of Anna at Jantar Mantar was for five days, while the August one at Ramlila grounds was for 13 days. A comparison of coverage of four news channels (two English and two Hindi) is made here.

Four Different Periods: Coverage of Corruption and Anna

On an average, these four news channels had devoted 68-98 minutes of prime time per day for covering Anna's fast at Jantar Mantar in April against 151-161 minutes of prime time per day devoted for the second fast at Ramlila grounds in August 2011. English news channels were far more ahead in covering Anna Hazare from the very outset. All news channels devoted 50 percent to 100 percent more of their prime time per day for covering Ramlila days than what they devoted for the first fast at Jantar Mantar. On an average, NDTV 24x7 devoted 161 minutes daily of its prime time. Little over 60 percent of prime time of news channels was from out of Ramlila grounds "live".



As the story developed, it is obvious that prime time coverage of Anna crusade was deliberate rather than a casual coverage as in the case of scams which were covered. In the case of Anna there was no scam, but the coverage was kept up by news media. And, unlike the coverage of other stories, all of Anna's coverage by channels was "live". It is also evident that scams

provided the backdrop for Anna's war against corruption. 2G, CWG, Adarsh Society, Harsan Ali and the likes provided context for flagging Anna, as much as the Lokpal Bill, and Ramdev agitation on a sustained basis. Truly, news channels gave a "saturated coverage" during prime time to Anna's fast all the 13 days at Ramlila ground.

Comparison: Anna-Ramdev Fasts

Anna's and Ramdev's crusade happened at two different time points. Anna's fast of 13 days occupied 64 percent of front page of Dainik Bhaskar against 39 percent of The Hindu's front pages of those days. Dainik Jagran had 53 stories on the front page against 29 stories of the Hindu and 45 percent by Times of India. Dainik Bhaskar devoted 15331 sqcm of front page space against 9364 sqcm of the Hindu front pages during the 13 day period. In the case of 5 days of Ramdev's fast, both English and Hindi dailies devoted much less as could be seen from the table giving the percent of front page space devoted.

Channels went all out in covering Anna Hazare live. Perhaps they found much more to report and from more places and sustain the coverage – and from across the country – unlike in the case of Ramdev which was limited to Delhi. The pattern of coverage by English and Hindi channels differed too.

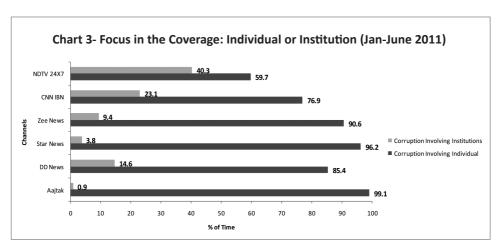
Table 1: Ramdev and Anna: Coverage in Newspapers

		Space in %
Newspapers		Anna Hazare Coverage (17-29 Aug 2011)
Dainik Jagran	29	60
Dainik Bhaskar	26	64
Hindustan	35	43
The Hindu	28	39
The Times of India	18	45
Hindustan Times	23	54

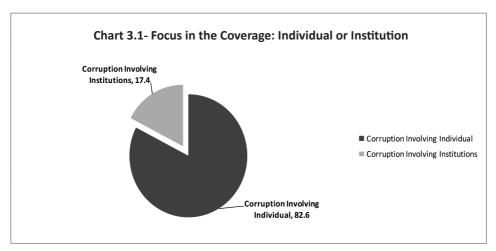
Table 2: Ramdev and Anna: Coverage in News Channels

		Per day average in minutes
Channels	Baba Ramdev Coverage (2-6 June 2011)	Anna Hazare Coverage (16-28 Aug 2011)
Aaj Tak	102	150
Star News	101	157
CNN IBN	84	151
NDTV 24x7	66	161

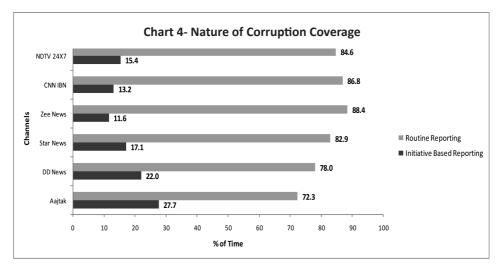
Focus & Thrust of Coverage



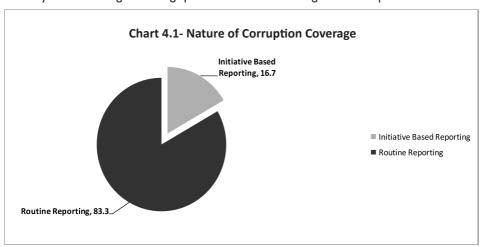
English channels NDTV 24X7 and CNN IBN had focused in the coverage of both institutional and individual levels of corruptions. Whereas Hindi news channels, Star News, Zee News and Aaj Tak, focused more on corruption involving individuals.



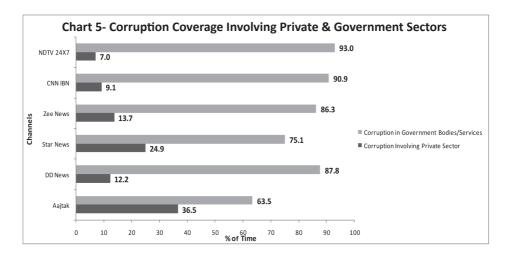
Overall, 80% of corruption coverage focused on individuals. For example, individuals such as Suresh Kalmadi, A Raja, Ashok Chavan, Hasan Ali etc figured predominantly and repeatedly in the coverage.



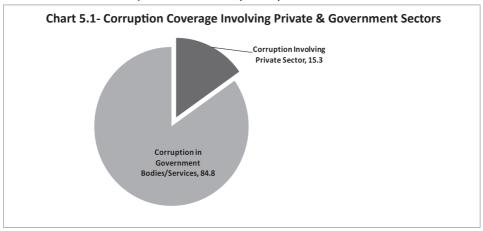
Initiative based reporting was marginal in channels. However, Hindi news channels carried relatively more coverage involving special drive than their English counterparts.



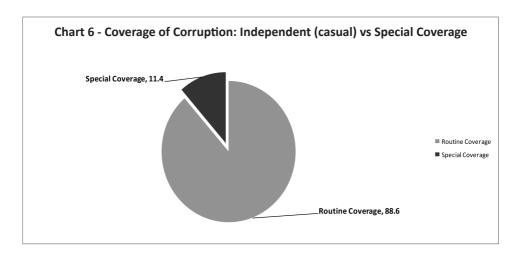
The study indicated that reporting corruption is now routine for news media- 83% of prime time coverage on corruption is such reporting. Apparently there was no need to mount any special coverage as they used to do in the earlier years.



Aaj Tak had more coverage of corruption in the private sector compared to other news channels. Still corruption involving Government sector dominated the coverage of all news channels. A quarter of Star News coverage during the period was of private/ corporate. In fact more than one-third of Aaj Tak too was of corporate/private sector.

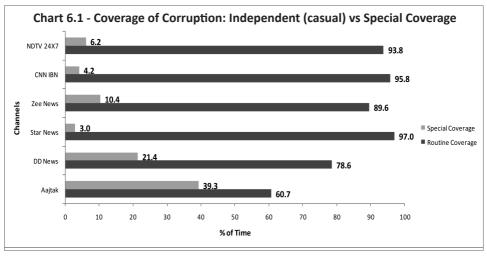


The channels devoted most time on corruption relating to government bodies/services. Coverage of corruption in private sector apparently is catching up. In 2011, the coverage by news channels was between 7% (NDTV 24x7) and 35% (Aaj Tak).

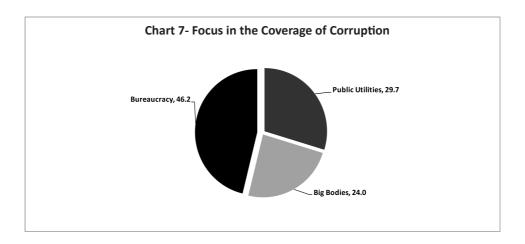


In covering corruption, channels devoted most of their time on independent news stories.

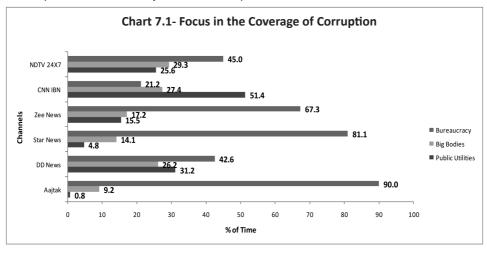
The channels barely carried special series to expose corruption.



Aaj Tak and DD News devoted more time on special coverage compared to other news channels.



The channels focused more on the scams referring bureaucracy (IAS/IPS officers involved in corruption) and the remaining coverage was focused on Public utilities and followed by big bodies (CWG, Adarsh Society, DGCA, GNDA).



All channels devoted their maximum prime time for corruption related to bureaucracy; CNN IBN was an exception in this regard as it focused more on public utilities.

Table 3: Origin of Corruption News:Top 5 States (Jan to June 2011)

Top 5 States with most corruption coverage	Time %
Delhi (include NCR)	70.67
Maharashtra	8.66
Uttar Pradesh	4.03
Uttaranchal	1.49
Tamil Nadu	1.47

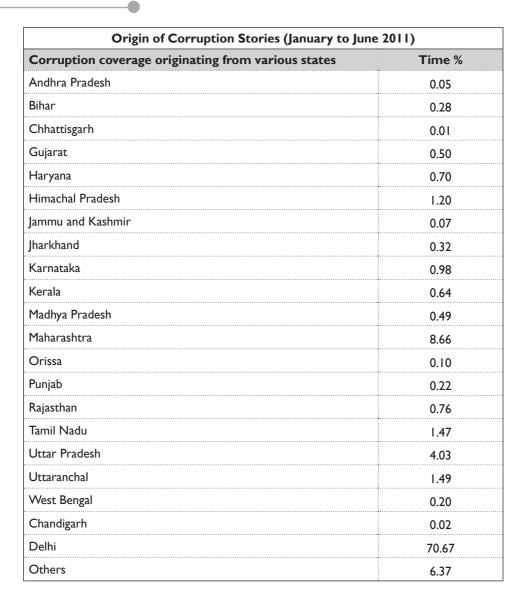
Perhaps because the channels covered are based mostly in Delhi, two-thirds of corruption stories covered originated there. (Times Now, based in Mumbai, was not included in this study). Next to Delhi, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh figured but relatively much less. This however does not mean there was no corruption in other states. Regional channels must have covered.

TV News Coverage of Corruption Trends for 2010 & 2011							
	2010 (Jan to May)	2011 (Jan to June)					
Corruption Issues	Total Time (%)	Total Time (in %)					
Initiative Based Reporting	15.80	16.65					
Routine Reporting	84.15	83.35					
	100.00	100.00					
Corruption Involving Individual	37.01	82.6					
Corruption Involving Institutions	62.94	17.4					
	100.00	100.00					
Routine Coverage	69.81	88.58					
Special Coverage	30.16	11.42					
	100.00	100.00					
Public Utilities	33.14	29.74					
Big Bodies	41.97	24.05					
Bureaucracy	24.92	46.21					
	100.00	100.00					
Corruption Involving Private Sector	4.61	15.25					
Corruption in Government Bodies/Services	95.35	84.75					
	100.00	100.00					

TV News Coverage of Corruption	on Trends Ja	anuary to June	2011				
	TOTAL						
Corruption Issues	No of	Total Time	Total Time				
	story	(in min)	(in %)				
Initiative Based Reporting	303	2141	16.65				
Routine Reporting	3169	10717	83.35				
	3472	12858	100				
Corruption Involving Individual	2892	10618	82.6				
Corruption Involving Institutions	580	2241	17.4				
·	3472	12858	100				
Routine Coverage	3350	11390	88.58				
Special Coverage	122	1468	11.42				
	3472	12858	100				
Public Utilities	658	2871	29.74				
Big Bodies	733	2321	24.05				
Bureaucracy	1342	4461	46.21				
	2733	9653	100				
Corruption Involving Private Sector	528	1961	15.25				
Corruption in Government Bodies/Services	2944	10897	84.75				
	3472	12858	100				

Channel-wise Coverage of Corruption Trends January to June 2011									
	AAJTAK			DD NEWS			STAR NEWS		
Corruption Issues	No of	Total Time	Total Time (in		Total Time	Total Time (in	No of	Total Time	Total Time (in
	story	(min)	%)	story	(min)	%)	story	(min)	%)
Initiative Based Reporting	32	362	27.67	26	396	22.01	143	352	17.11
Routine Reporting	278	946	72.33	521	1403	77.99	608	1703	82.89
Corruption Involving Individual	297	1295	99.1	501	1535	85.4	706	1977	96.2
Corruption Involving Institutions	13	12.3	0.94	46	263	14.6	45	77.6	3.78
Routine Coverage	266	793	60.69	519	1413	78.55	741	1993	96.98
Special Coverage	44	514	39.31	28	386	21.45	10	62	3.02
Public Utilities	4	3	0.79	122	508	31.25	34	55	4.79
Big Bodies	23	31	9.20	164	426	26.16	69	162	14.14
Bureaucracy	138	304	90.01	209	693	42.59	370	926	81.07
Corruption Involving Pvt Sector	90	478	36.54	58	219	12.19	153	512	24.92
Corruption in Govt Bodies/Services	220	830	63.46	489	1579	87.81	598	1543	75.08

	ZEE NEWS			CNN IBN			NDTV 24X7		
Corruption Issues	No of		Total Time (in %)	No of	Time	Total Time (in %)	No of		Total Time (in %)
Initiative Based Reporting	36	253	11.60	45	414	13.18	21	365	15.36
Routine Reporting	509	1925	88.40	695	2728	86.82	558	2012	84.64
Corruption Involving Individual	472	1973	90.6	526	2418	76.9	390	1419	59.7
Corruption Involving Institutions	73	205	9.41	214	724	23.1	189	958	40.3
Routine Coverage	528	1951	89.58	725	3010	95.77	571	2231	93.82
Special Coverage	17	227	10.42	15	133	4.23	8	147	6.18
Public Utilities	35	203	15.45	299	1518	51.42	164	584	25.62
Big Bodies	83	226	17.21	215	809	27.38	179	668	29.33
Bureaucracy	263	886	67.34	169	626	21.19	193	1026	45.05
Corruption Involving Pvt Sector	71	298	13.66	97	287	9.15	59	167	7.03
Corruption in Govt Bodies/Services	474	1880	86.34	643	2855	90.85	520	2210	92.97





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CMS India Corruption Studies (some)

- Face of Corruption in News Media A Report on their Coverage (2011)
- India Corruption Study 2010 Is the Scenario Changing? (2011)
- Face of Corruption in News Media A Report on their Coverage (2010)
- India Corruption Study: 2002 2009 A Comparative Scenario (2010)
- TII-CMS India Corruption Study with Focus on BPL Households (2007)
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ARE WE LOOSING TRACK OF "CHECKS AND BALANCE?

To other issue or even a calamity has ever received centre stage of national discourse as much as Anna Hazare's crusade. The campaign for 'Jan Lokpal Bill' as a part of his fight against corruption received 'saturated coverage' of media. This was described by some observers as "coercive coverage". However, never before (including in the case of the knowerful RTI Act) has a Bill polarized the polity in our country. Yet, while unleashing itself, the knowerful RTI Act) has a Bill polarized the polity in our country. Yet, while unleashing itself, the considering the effected apprehensions and concerns of critics. Considering the country, we fransparency Review too and cons of Anna's crusade in activating citizenty as much as the political eaders of the country, we fransparency Review too and cons of Anna's crusade in activating citizenty as under the sage. Perspectives and cons of Anna's crusade in activating citizenty as under the sage. Perspective so and cons of Anna's crusade in activating citizenty as under the sage. Perspective as the sage of th

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Hence, the debate that democratic five pillars of the Society,

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