



World Press Freedom Index 2021

Why in News

India has ranked 142nd yet again out of 180 nations in the recently unveiled [World Press Freedom Index](#).

- The index is **published each year by** the international journalism not-for-profit body, **Reporters Without Borders (RSF)**.

Key Points

▪ About the World Press Freedom Index:

- It has been published every year since 2002 by **Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF)** or Reporters Without Borders.
- Based in Paris, RSF is an independent NGO with consultative status with the [United Nations](#), [UNESCO](#), **the Council of Europe and the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF)**.
 - OIF is a 54 french speaking nations collective.
- The Index **ranks countries and regions according to the level of freedom available to journalists**. However it is **not an indicator on the quality of journalism**.
- The **parameters include** pluralism, media independence, media environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency, and the quality of the infrastructure that supports the production of news and information.

▪ Global Scenario:

- **Journalism**, the main vaccine against disinformation, is **completely or partly blocked in 73% of the 180 countries**.
- **Only 12 of the Index's 180 countries** (7%) can claim to **offer a favourable environment for journalism**.
- **Covid-19 pandemic** has been used to perfection by nations to control the spread of information.
- The Report has **raised concern about the larger Asia-Pacific region** as several nations in an attempt to curb freedom of press have in place **draconian laws on 'sedition,' 'state secrets' and 'national security'**.
- **Norway has topped** yet again for the fifth year in the row, **followed by Finland and Denmark**.
- **Eritrea is at the bottom** meanwhile **China is ranked 177**, and is only above North Korea at 179 and Turkmenistan at 178.

▪ India's Performance Analysis:

- India **was ranked 142 in the year 2020 as well**, thus showing no improvement in the environment it provides to its journalists.
- India **has fared poorly amongst its neighbours** with Nepal at 106, Sri Lanka at 127 and Bhutan at 65. Pakistan is a close follower at 145th spot.
- India is **among the countries classified "bad" for journalism** and is termed as one of the most dangerous countries for journalists trying to do their jobs properly.

- The report has blamed **an environment of intimidation created by the nationalist government for any critical journalist** often brandishing them as anti state or anti national.
 - The **situation is worrying in Kashmir**, where incidents of harassment of reporters by police and paramilitaries have surfaced.
- **Reasons Behind India's Poor Performance:**
 - **Journalists are exposed to every kind of attack**, including police violence against reporters, ambushes by political activists, and reprisals instigated by criminal groups or corrupt local officials.
 - The journalists **have often been subjected to coordinated hate campaigns** on social networks.
 - Such campaigns are **particularly violent when the targets are women.**

Freedom of Press

- The Constitution, the supreme law of the land, guarantees **freedom of speech and expression under Article 19**, which deals with 'Protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech, etc.
- Freedom of press is not expressly protected by Indian legal system but it is **impliedly protected under article 19(1) (a) of the constitution**, which states - "All citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression".
- In 1950, the Supreme Court in **Romesh Thappar v. State of Madras** observed that freedom of the press lay at the foundation of all democratic organisations.
- However, Freedom of press is also **not absolute**. It faces certain restrictions under Article 19(2), which are as follows-
 - Matters related to interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.

Source: IE

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