



CURRENT AFFAIRS



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WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX 2023

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "World Press Freedom Index 2023". The topic "World Press Freedom Index 2023" has relevance in the International Relations section for the UPSC CSE exam.

Relevance of the topic "World Press Freedom Index 2023"

For Prelims:

What is the World Press Freedom Index 2023?

Who releases the World Press Freedom Index?

What is Reporters sans Borders?

For Mains:

GS 2:International Relations

What is the significance of the ranking in World Press Freedom Index 2023?

Way Forward

Why in the news?

India's ranking in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index has slipped to 161 out of 180 countries, according to the latest report released by the global media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

What is the World Press Freedom Index?

The World Press Freedom Index is an annual report published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) that evaluates the level of press freedom in countries around the world. The report measures the level of freedom that journalists, media outlets, and netizens have in each country to gather and disseminate news and information, without fear of censorship, retaliation, or violence.

The World Press Freedom Index ranks 180 countries based on a variety of factors, including media independence, pluralism, legal framework, transparency, and the safety of journalists. The report aims to raise awareness about the importance of press freedom and to hold governments accountable for any violations of this fundamental right.

The World Press Freedom Index has been published annually since 2002 and has become an important tool for researchers, journalists, and policymakers to monitor the state of press freedom around the world.

What is the ranking of India in the World Press Freedom Index?

According to the latest report released by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), India's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index has dropped to 161 out of 180 countries, down from its previous rank of 150 in 2022. This suggests that press freedom in India has faced significant challenges and

restrictions, as journalists and media outlets are increasingly facing censorship, legal harassment, and violence.

In contrast, Pakistan has improved its ranking, moving up to 150 from last year's 157th rank, indicating a relatively better situation for media freedom in the country. Similarly, Sri Lanka has made significant progress, moving up to 135th position this year from 146th in 2022.

It is worth noting that Norway, Ireland, and Denmark hold the top three positions in the press freedom ranking, indicating a favorable environment for press freedom in these countries. In contrast, Vietnam, China, and North Korea occupy the bottom three positions, reflecting severe restrictions on media freedom and human rights abuses in these countries.

Who releases the World Press Freedom Index?

It is published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) that evaluates the level of press freedom in countries around the world.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF), or in French, Reporters Sans Frontières, is an international non-profit organisation that advocates for press freedom, the safety of journalists, and the protection of human rights.

The organisation was founded in 1985 in Montpellier, France and it has since grown to become a global network of journalists, media professionals, and activists who work to defend and promote free speech, independent journalism, and the right to information.

What is the significance of the ranking in the World Press Freedom Index 2023?

The ranking in the World Press Freedom Index is significant because:

1. **Status of the press in the country:** Comprehensive overview of the state of press freedom in each country, as well as how that country's press freedom situation compares to others around the world.
2. **Evaluation of laws and policies related to the press:** It evaluates the legal framework for media freedom, the level of censorship and self-censorship, the safety of journalists, and the level of pluralism and media independence.
3. **Reference for the policy makers:** It serves as a reference for policymakers, international organisations, and the media industry to identify areas for improvement and to take action to protect and promote press freedom.

Way Forward

India's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index has been relatively low in recent years, and there are several factors that contribute to this. Here are some of the main reasons:

- **Violence against journalists:** India has a poor record when it comes to the safety of journalists. Journalists in India have faced physical attacks, harassment, and even murder in some cases. This creates a climate of fear and self-censorship, which can stifle freedom of the press. The case of Siddiqui Kappan incarcerated for years is an example.
- **Government restrictions:** The Indian government has placed restrictions on media coverage in some cases, such as during periods of civil unrest or in areas affected by insurgency or terrorism. These restrictions can limit the ability of journalists to report on important events. After the abrogation of Article 370, there were restrictions imposed by the government in the valley.
- **Internet shutdowns:** India has one of the highest rates of internet shutdowns in the world. These shutdowns often occur during times of civil unrest or protests and can make it difficult for journalists to access information and report on events.

- **Legal harassment:** Journalists in India are often subjected to legal harassment, including defamation lawsuits and sedition charges. These legal actions can be used as a way to silence critical reporting.
- **Political pressure:** There is often political pressure on media organizations in India to report in a certain way or to avoid certain topics. This pressure can also lead to self-censorship and a reluctance to report on sensitive issues.

Way Forward

Overall, these factors contribute to a challenging environment for journalists in India, which can limit the freedom of the press and lead to a lower ranking in the World Press Freedom Index. There is a need for a free environment for the journalists to work. They are a reflection of the country's polity and society.

Source:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-slips-in-world-press-freedom-index-ranks-161-out-of-180-countries/article66806608.ece>

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