

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 286
TO BE ANSWERED ON 24.07.2024**

DECLINE IN INDIA'S PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

286. SHRI VIJAYAKUMAR ALIAS VIJAY VASANTH:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has noticed that India's press freedom index is declining;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the action taken by the Government to resolve this issue;
- (d) whether India is ranked 159 out of the 180 nations considered in the 2024 edition of the press freedom index; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS, INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING, AND
ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI ASHWINI VAISHNAW)**

(a) to (e): The Government is committed to ensure the right to freedom of speech and expression enshrined under the Article 19 of the Constitution of India. India has a robust and flourishing press. This is reflected in the fact that during the last 10 years from 2014-15 till date, the number of registered periodicals has gone up 43.9% from 1,05,443 to 1,51,734. Similarly, the number of private satellite TV channels has also significantly gone up during this period from 821 to 910 which includes 393 news channels.

In order to ensure freedom of press, Press Council of India (PCI), a statutory autonomous body, has been set up under the Press Council Act, 1978. PCI considers complaints filed 'by the Press' concerning curtailment of press freedom, physical assault/attack on journalists etc. under Section 13 of the Press Council Act 1978. PCI is also mandated to take suo-motu cognizance in matters on the pressing issues concerning freedom of Press and safeguarding of its high standards.

Similarly, the freedom of press in electronic media is ensured through a self-regulatory mechanism under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, which inter-alia provides that the private satellite TV channels will adhere to a Programme Code in respect of content broadcast by them. The Cable Television Network (Amendment) Rules, 2021, provides that complaints relating to violation of the Programme Code are to be addressed by a three-tier grievance redressal mechanism. Also, for content of publishers of news and current affairs on digital media, the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 prescribed a code of Ethics to be adhered to by such publishers.

The Central Government attaches highest importance to the safety and security to every citizen of the country including journalists. An advisory specifically on safety of journalists was issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs to States/ UTs on 20th October 2017, which is available on their website, requesting them to strictly enforce the laws to ensure the safety and security of the media persons.

Some organizations have attempted evaluation of press freedom using very low sample size and with little or no understanding of our country and its vibrant democracy. Such organizations and their methodology are questionable and not reliable.
