

Bhutan improves in press freedom index

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Bhutan has steadily improved in the press freedom index compiled by Reporters Sans Frontières' (Reporters without Borders), an international non-government organization, advocating freedom of press in the world.

Bhutan was ranked 70th out of 175 countries in press freedom index 2009. Denmark was ranked number one and Eritrea took the last place. India was ranked 105th.

In 2002, when Bhutan was included in the index for the first time, it was ranked 135th out of 139 countries. India was ranked 80th. Finland topped the index and North Korea took the last place.

The position did not improve much in 2003 when Bhutan was ranked 157th out of 166 countries. However, in 2004, Bhutan moved to 146th position out of 167 countries. In 2005, Bhutan improved by four positions and reached 142nd out of 167 countries. India was 106th. Denmark took the first position while North Korea still held the bottom place.

In 2006, Bhutan leaped to the 98th position out of 168 countries. The same year, India was ranked 105th. Finland took the first position and North Korea still remained at the bottom.

Bhutan fell to 116th out of 169 countries in 2007. India ranked 120th while Iceland replaced Finland and Eritrea replaced North Korea.

In 2008, Bhutan shot up to 74th out of 173 countries. India was ranked 118th.

The index was drawn by asking journalists, researchers and legal experts to answer 50 questions about press freedom violations such as murder or arrest of journalists, censorship, pressure, state monopolies in various fields, and punishment of press law offences and regulation of the media.

Reporters Without Borders aims at defending journalists and media assistants imprisoned or persecuted for doing their job. It exposes mistreatment and torture of journalists in many countries.

It fights against censorship and laws that undermine press freedom, gives financial aid to journalists or media outlets in difficulty as well as to the families of imprisoned journalists.

It also works to improve the safety of journalists, especially those reporting in war zones.

By Tandin Pem

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