

M'sia slips one down to 144 in press freedom index
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Despite the proclamation by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to liberate the media, the Malaysian press remains 'not free' in the eyes of a global watchdog, dropping another point from 143 to 144 out of 197 countries in international press freedom ranking.

The findings were released by US-based Freedom House in its Freedom of the Press 2012 report.

NONE Although Malaysia scores 63 points, slightly better than the 64 points the previous year, but this could not help it catch up with other countries, hence the slip in ranking.

Countries rubbing against each other in the same spot are Madagascar, Cambodia, Jordan and Pakistan.

Freedom House, situated in Washington DC, found that the year 2011 featured precarious but potentially far-reaching gains for media freedom in the Middle East and North Africa.

Freedom quake hits middle east

"Major steps forward were recorded in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, where longtime dictators were removed after successful popular uprisings.

egypt revolution mubarak steps down flag 1" While trends in these countries were not uniformly positive, with important setbacks to democratic prospects in both Egypt and Libya toward year's end, the magnitude of the improvements - especially in Tunisia and Libya - represented major breakthroughs in a region that has a long history of media control by autocratic leaders," read the report.

Within South-East Asia, East Timor, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand sit above Malaysia. They fall into the category of 'partly free' while Malaysia remains in the category of 'not free'.

East Timor is ranked 75 with 35 points, the Philippines is ranked 88 with 42 points, Indonesia is ranked 97 with 49 points, while Thailand is ranked 132 with 60 points. All these countries have moved up the ranking.

azlan The 'good' news for Malaysia is that it is ranked above Singapore (150), Brunei (166), Vietnam (182), Laos (182) and Burma (187).

Najib had earlier proclaimed that his three-year premiership had brought about more media freedom, citing another press freedom index produced by Reporters Without Borders in which Malaysia had moved up nine places.

According to the survey, the top 10 countries are Finland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland, Andorra, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

The 10 worst are Burma, China, Syria, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Belarus, Eritrea, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and North Korea.

The report places each country in one of three categories - free, partly free and not free.

The lower the number of points, the higher a country ranks in terms of press freedom.

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