

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

**RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.557
TO BE ANSWERED ON 02.12.2021**

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX 2021

557. SHRI KUMAR KETKAR:

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

- (a) whether as per World Press Freedom Index 2021, India is placed at 142 of 180 countries, down by 2 places compared with 2019, and remains "bad for Journalism" and "one of the world's most dangerous countries" for journalists;
- (b) whether Tripura police booked 102 people, including journalists, under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, the details thereof; and
- (c) whether Editors Guild of India (EGD) has said that "this is an extremely disturbing trend where such a harsh law wherein process of investigation and bail applications are extremely rigorous and overbearing, is being used for merely reporting on and protesting against communal violence"?

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING; AND
MINISTER OF YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS
(SHRI ANURAG SINGH THAKUR)**

- (a) The Government has come across reports carrying the survey of World Press Freedom Index published by 'Reporters Without Borders'.**

However, the Government does not agree to the conclusions drawn by this organization for various reasons including very low sample size, little or no weightage to fundamentals of democracy, adoption of a methodology which is questionable and non-transparent, lack of clear definition of press freedom etc.

The Government is committed to ensure the right to freedom of speech and expression enshrined under the Article 19 of the Constitution of India. Press Council of India (PCI), a statutory autonomous body, has been set up under the Press Council Act, 1978 mainly to preserve the freedom of the Press and improve the standards of newspapers and news agencies in the country. 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 empowered to take *suo-motu* cognizance in matters on the pressing issues concerning freedom of Press and safeguarding of its high standards.

The Central Government implements a Journalist Welfare Scheme under which financial assistance is provided to journalists and their families in cases of death, accidents, etc.

(b) & (c) 'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India and State Governments are responsible for prevention, detection, registration and investigation of crime and for prosecuting the criminals through their law enforcement agencies.

Central Government attaches highest importance to the safety and security of every citizen of the country including journalists. An advisory specifically on safety of journalists was issued to States/ UTs on 20th October 2017 requesting them to strictly enforce the law to ensure the safety and security of media persons, which is available on the website www.mha.gov.in
