

Taiwan moved up six places in this year's World Press Freedom Index, released yesterday by Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF), but this does not reflect real improvement, the report said.

The Paris-based watchdog organization said that the jump "does not reflect real improvements, but rather a global worsening of the situation in the rest of the world."

According to the report, the number of countries with a "good" or "fairly good" state of the media has fallen by 2.3 percent, with press freedom deteriorating in nearly two-thirds of the 180 countries on the index.

At 45th place, Taiwan still boasts the most liberal press in Asia, with South Korea and Mongolia trailing in 63rd and 69th place respectively.

The ranking is one of the major factors that compelled RSF to open their first Asia bureau headquarters in Taipei earlier this month.

The organization chose Taipei over Hong Kong, which while 54th in 2012, has plummeted to a new low of 73rd, under the shadow of China — which consistently ranks within the bottom 10. Taiwan has remained relatively stable, hovering between 45th and 51st place since 2010. It now trails the US by two places.

The index describes Taiwan's situation as "media freedom on hold," stating that "the main threat to media freedom comes from China, which has been exerting growing economic and political pressure on the Taiwanese media."

Local government officials are also directly interfering in the editorial policies of state-owned media, it said.

## Taiwan's press freedom No. 1 in Asia

Written by Taipei Times

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“Even in democracies like Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, media freedom shall never be taken for granted, as political and financial powers will always try to interfere if they get a chance,” RSF Asia Bureau director Cedric Alviani said. “Self-censorship is another problem ... a lot of journalists cannot freely write what they want because they might get in trouble.”

Alviani said that China's efforts to pressure businesses to censor media content can also affect Taiwan.

Recently, Apple TV blocked the satirical China Uncensored show not only in China, but also in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Produced in New York, the show is highly critical of Beijing and can still be viewed in Taiwan on YouTube.

“This is a big concern for us,” he said. “It is a very bad precedent that might lead to other things. It looks small, but it is not. There is a risk for Hong Kong, and Taiwan in a lesser measure, to be dragged down by Chinese intervention.”

Presidential Office spokesman Sidney Lin (林錫山) said Taiwan's improved rating in the index this year serves as proof that the nation's years-long pursuit of progressive values of democracy, freedom and human rights has earned international recognition.

“Press freedom is a significant indicator when evaluating a nation's level of freedom. Taiwan will continue to adhere to these values, consolidate democracy and dedicate itself to maintaining the stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region,” Lin said.

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