Taiwan is the 10th-freest country in the world, according to The Human Freedom Index 2018 released yesterday by Canadian think tank the Fraser Institute, while China sits near the bottom at 135th.

Taiwan allows the greatest personal freedom in East Asia, having received the highest score in the category in the region, the institute said in a report.

While Taiwan has moved up from 43rd place in 2008, China has remained near the bottom as the least-free country in East Asia, it said.

“China is by far the least-free nation in East Asia, creating concerns for neighboring jurisdictions as it promotes its model of undemocratic governance internationally,” said Fred McMahon, holder of the institute’s Dr Michael A. Walker research chair in economic freedom and editor of the report.

The index — jointly compiled by the institute, Germany’s Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the Cato Institute in the US — ranked 162 countries and jurisdictions based on 79 indicators of personal, civil and economic freedoms.

New Zealand tops the index, followed by Switzerland.

Hong Kong, the world’s freest jurisdiction for several years, was ranked third.

From fourth to ninth are Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland and the UK in descending order.

Norway, Finland and Taiwan share 10th place.

Germany at 13th and the US at 17th failed to make it to the top 10.

Other notable countries are South Korea, ranked 27th, and Japan at 31st.

Syria is the least-free country on the index at 162nd.

Freedom has declined around the world over the past decade, the institute said, adding that of the 142 jurisdictions with data since 2008, 81 have declined in freedom, 58 have increased and three were unchanged.

People in freer countries are more prosperous than those in less-free countries, it said.

For example, the average per capita income for the top-quartile countries on the index was US$39,249, compared with US$12,026 for the least-free quartile in 2016, the most recent year with available comparable data, it said.

“The evidence is clear — when people are free, they have much greater opportunity to prosper and they lead happier, healthier lives,” McMahon said.

Source: Taipei Times - 2018/12/12