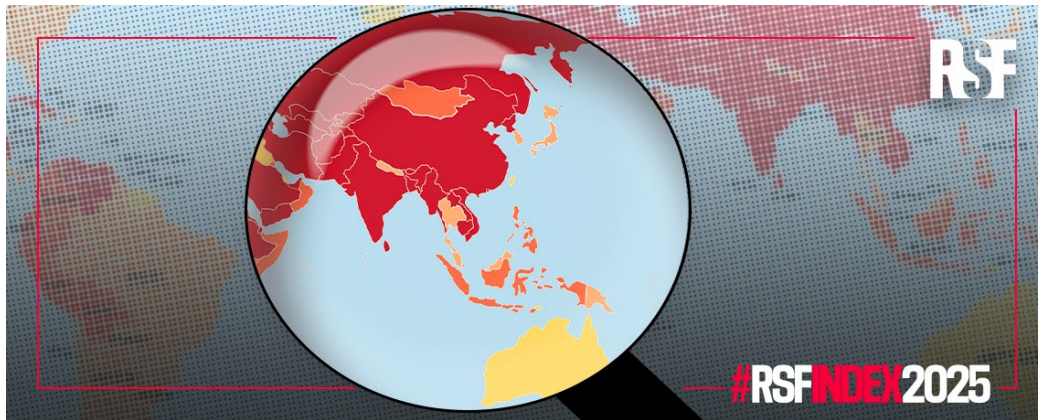
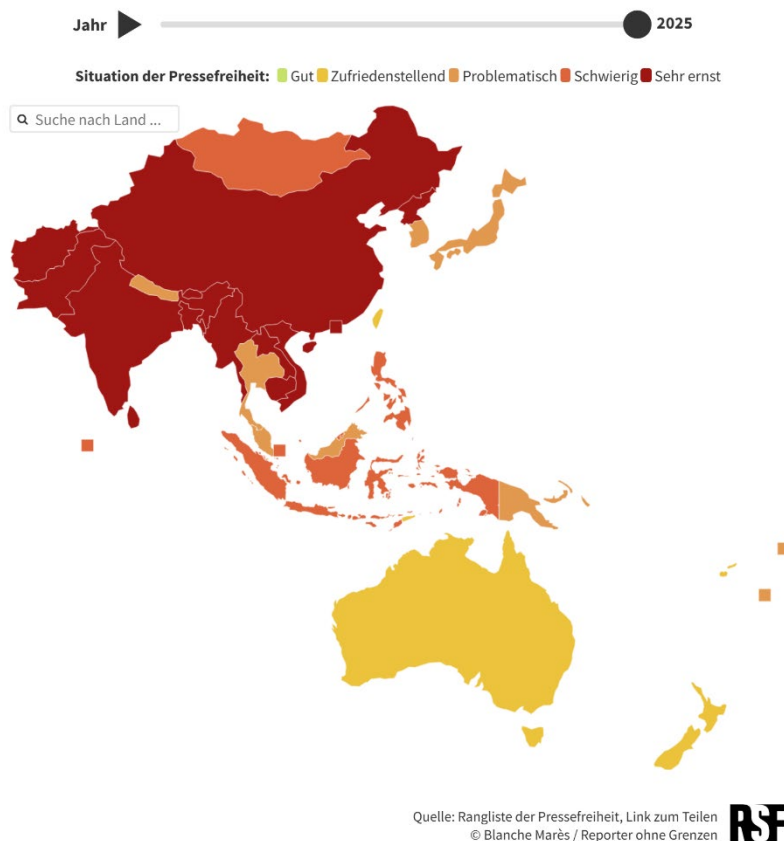


Asia – Pacific:

Authoritarian regimes use economic pressure to control the press



In the Asia-Pacific region, press freedom and access to reliable news sources are severely compromised by the predominance of regimes — often authoritarian — that strictly control information, often through economic means. In many countries, the government has a tight grip on media ownership, allowing them to interfere in outlets' editorial choices. It is highly telling that twenty of the region's 32 countries and territories saw their economic indicators drop in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index.



Authoritarian regimes' systematic control of the media

The region harbours some of the most advanced states in terms of media control. In [North Korea](#) (179), the media are nothing more than propaganda tools entirely subordinate to the country's totalitarian regime. In [China](#) (178) and [Vietnam](#) (173), outlets are either state-owned or controlled by groups closely tied to the countries' respective Communist parties, and the only independent reporting comes from freelance journalists who mainly operate underground, working under constant threat and with no financial stability. Meanwhile, foreign outlets can find themselves blacklisted at any given moment.

Growing repression and increasing uncertainty

The crackdown on press freedom is spreading across the region and is increasingly inspired by the Chinese method of controlling information. Since the military coup in [Myanmar](#) (169), many of the country's independent outlets have been dismantled. The few that remain are forced to work underground or from exile and can barely continue operations due to the lack of sustainable revenue. Similarly, crackdowns on press freedom in [Cambodia](#) (161) and [Hong Kong](#) (140), where the press freedom situation has become "very serious," have led to newsroom closures, journalists fleeing into exile — often with fragile finances — and pro-government outlets absorbing most media funding. In [Afghanistan](#) (175), at least 12 new media outlets were forced to close in 2024 due to new directives imposed by the Taliban. In the United States, the [decision](#) made in March by President Donald Trump led to the suspension of Radio Free Asia's (RFA) [shortwave radio programmes](#) in Mandarin, Tibetan and Lao, as well as the furlough of most US-based staff, including at-risk visa holders, potentially turning entire regions into information blackouts.

Media concentration and political collusion

In several countries, the concentration of media ownership in the hands of political magnates threatens media plurality. In [India](#) (151), [Indonesia](#) (127) and [Malaysia](#) (88), a handful of politically connected conglomerates control most media groups. In [Thailand](#) (85), the major media groups maintain close ties with the military or royal elite, who directly influence their content. Similarly, in [Mongolia](#) (102), influential individuals from the business world, who are often close to those in power, own a dominant share of the media landscape and use it to promote their political and economic interests. In [Pakistan](#) (158), the authorities threaten independent outlets with the cancellation of government advertising contracts.

Economic pressure even in democracies

Independent outlets in established democracies have also fallen prey to economic pressure. In [Taiwan](#) (24), a rare case of [government pressure](#) affected the English-speaking public broadcaster *TaiwanPlus*, whose funding was also significantly reduced by Parliament, which is controlled by opposition parties. In [Australia](#) (29), the media market's heavy concentration limits the diversity of voices represented in the news, while independent outlets struggle to find a sustainable economic model.