

Important Vocab For the Editorial

1. **well-being** (noun) – healthy state, comfort/happiness, prosperity.
2. **heightened** (adjective) – increased, amplified, intensified.
3. **wake-up call** (noun) – something which alerts a person to a problem and makes him/her to do some remedial action.
4. **hatred** (noun) – dislike, hostility, resentment/aversion.
5. **degenerate** (verb) – deteriorate, decline, slide/worsen.
6. **in the line of duty/work** (phrase) – while someone is working.
7. **qualitatively** (adverb) – in relation to the qualities of something.
8. **purge** (verb) – clear-out, remove, get rid of, absolve.
9. **manifestation** (noun) – display, indication, exhibition/presentation.
10. **be at the receiving end of** (phrase) – be subjected to something.
11. **separatism** (noun) – dissension, nonconformity, dissent/faction.
12. **insurgency** (noun) – uprising, revolt, rebellion.
13. **anachronistic** (adjective) – old-fashioned, bygone, outmoded.
14. **sedition** (noun) – incitement (to riot/rebellion), agitation, trouble making/provocation.
15. **wrath** (noun) – anger, rage/fury, annoyance/indignation.
16. **militant** (noun) – extremist, radical, fanatic, sectarian/partisan.
17. **hyper-nationalist** (adjective) – relating to a person with extreme/excessive nationalism.
18. **intolerance** (noun) – prejudice, bias, bigotry/partisanship.
19. **objective** (noun) – aim, intention, purpose.
20. **unprecedented** (adjective) – not done or experienced before.
21. **barring** (preposition) – except for, with the exception of, discounting.
22. **credentialed** (adjective) – relating to something/someone given credentials.
23. **case in point** (phrase) – example, instance, sample.
24. **isolated** (adjective) – single, lone/sole, only.
25. **systematic** (adjective) – methodical, organized/planned, orderly.
26. **hostile** (adjective) – opposed; aggressive, confrontational/belligerent.
27. **rhetoric** (noun) – bombast, loftiness, hyperbole/extravagant language.
28. **sovereignty** (noun) – autonomy, independence/freedom, self-government.
29. **pursuit** (noun) – aspiration for, quest for, search for.
30. **pluralist** (adjective) – coexisting; relating to (the people) exist in harmony irrespective of various differences.
31. **dynamic** (adjective) – liberal, advanced, forward-looking/forward-thinking.
32. **lure** (verb) – tempt, attract, persuade/coax.
33. **credentials** (noun) – achievements, capability, accomplishments.

Sword against pen

India needs a free and independent media for its own well-being

Journalists are facing heightened threats around the globe, according to the 2019 World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), covering 180 countries and territories. It notes that the number of countries regarded as safe for

journalists is on the decline; this should be a wake-up call. Hatred of journalists has degenerated into violence in many places, and India is no exception. In 2018, at least six Indian journalists were killed in the line of their work, the report said. India's rank fell by two places to 140 from 138 — in 2016 it was 133 and in 2017 it was 136. In 2014 India's ranking was 140, but this year's setback is qualitatively different. The report notes that organised campaigns by supporters of Hindutva “to purge all manifestations of ‘anti-national’ thought from the national debate” is putting journalists in danger. Women journalists are particularly at the receiving end, and covering sensitive but important topics of public interest such as separatism in Jammu and Kashmir and Maoist insurgency has become more difficult. Authorities use anachronistic sedition laws against journalists, who also face the wrath of militants and criminal gangs.

Hostility towards the **media** is a defining feature of hyper-nationalist politics in many countries. In India, the Centre and several State governments have not merely shown extreme intolerance towards objective and critical reporting but also taken unprecedented measures to restrict journalism. The Finance Minister's recent order barring credentialed reporters from the Ministry's premises is a case in point but this is not an isolated measure. There is a systematic attempt to limit the scope of journalism in India through physical restrictions, denial of information and hostile rhetoric against journalists by senior government functionaries. The Narendra Modi government is unlikely to take the RSF report seriously. While expression of concern by foreign countries or global bodies regarding human rights, religious violence or media freedom is routinely dismissed as external interference in India's sovereignty, the government knows all too well that in a globalised world these perceptions matter. What else would explain the Prime Minister's single-minded pursuit to improve India's position in the World Bank's annual Ease of Doing Business ranking? If India is concerned about its reputation in terms of business and investment, it should be equally or even more concerned about its standing as a democratic, pluralist country with a free and dynamic press. That is not so much for the inflow of investment or luring global corporations, which may care little about a destination-country's democratic credentials — but for India's well-being.