

# Academic Freedom Index (AFI)

November 5, 2020

## In news:

India has scored considerably low in the international Academic Freedom Index (AFI).

## More information:

- The index proposes a score for each country to help determine the level of academic freedom its universities and academic centres really enjoy.
- It tries to quantify the freedom of university scholars to debate politically and culturally controversial topics without fearing for their safety or studies.
- The authors, affiliated with the *Global Public Policy Institute*, the *Friedrich-Alexander-Universität (FAU) Erlangen-Nürnberg*, the *Scholars At Risk Network* and the *V-Dem Project at the University of Gothenburg*, have prepared the (AFI).
- The index has a **maximum value of 1**.

The AFI has **eight components**. Three are based on factual data and the remaining five are 'expert-coded'. The components are:

1. Freedom to research and teach
2. Freedom of academic exchange and dissemination
3. Institutional autonomy
4. Campus integrity
5. Freedom of academic and cultural expression
6. Constitutional protection of academic freedom
7. International legal commitment to academic freedom under the the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
8. Existence of universities

## India's performance:

- India has an **AFI of 0.352, comparable to the scores of Saudi Arabia and Libya.**
- It is in **5th position in South Asia.**
- It has not fared well in components like institutional autonomy, campus integrity, freedom of academic and cultural expression and constitutional protection of academic freedom.
- Most universities in the country are subjected to unsolicited interference from governments in both academic and nonacademic issues.
- A majority of appointments, to top ranking posts like that of vice chancellors, registrars, have been highly politicised.
- Such political appointments not only choke academic and creative freedom, but also lead to corrupt practices.
- This promotes unhealthy favouritism and nepotism in staff appointments and student admissions.
- This reflects a 'rent seeking culture' within the academic community.