

Central Media Accreditation Guidelines-2022

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In news– The Central government has released the Central Media Accreditation Guidelines-2022, recently.

About the guidelines-

- As per the guidelines, **accreditation will be withdrawn or suspended if a journalist acts in a manner prejudicial to the country's security, sovereignty and integrity**, friendly relations with foreign States, public order or is charged with a serious cognisable offence.
- Among the other circumstances under which the accreditation can be withdrawn/suspended are actions prejudicial to decency, or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.
- The new guidelines say that **accredited media persons have been prohibited from using the words "Accredited to the government of India"** on public/social media profile, visiting cards, letter heads or on any other form or any published work.
- **In the case of digital news publishers:**
 - The general terms of accreditation would apply.
 - News aggregators will not be considered.
 - The digital news publishers applying for accreditation should have furnished requisite information to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting under Rule 18 of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code), Rules, 2021, and have not violated the rules.
 - The website should have continuously operated for

- at least one year.
- The Editor of the news portal should be an Indian national.
- The website should have a registered office in India and the correspondents should be based in Delhi or National Capital Region.
- **No accreditation** will be granted to freelance **journalists working for foreign news media organisations**.
- **A journalist with a minimum of five years as a full-time working journalist can apply for accreditation to the PIB**, a process that is completed after a mandatory security check from the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Any journalist working with a newspaper which has a daily circulation of 10,000; news agencies with at least 100 subscribers and digital news platforms with 10 lakh unique visitors can apply.
- The Government of India shall constitute **a committee called the Central Media Accreditation Committee chaired by the Principal DG, Press Information Bureau (PIB)**, and comprising up to 25 members nominated by the Government **to interpret and implement the guidelines for withdrawal of accreditation**.

Importance-

- **Accreditation helps in access to government offices** and to special events and functions organized by the Government of India.
- **Some Ministries like Home and Defence and Finance allow access only to accredited journalists**.

Concern-

- In 2020, the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked **India 142nd among 180 countries on the World Press Freedom Index 2020**.
- **These guidelines**, point out experts, **carry the threat of**

- coming in the way of the functioning of a free media.**
- Besides, they carry the risk of **delegitimizing reports, especially of an investigative nature.**
 - **Any report critical of the Government could now be seen as prejudicial to the interests of the country** and it will be left to the interpretation and discretion of the Central Media Accreditation Committee to read the guidelines and decide what is defamatory while denying accreditation to a journalist.

Previous attempts to regulate media-

- Several attempts have been made by successive governments to keep the media in check by proposing guidelines more in the nature of censorship.
- As recently as **2018, the PIB, which functions under the I&B Ministry, had proposed a Fake News Guidelines** under which accreditation could be cancelled if the journalist was seen as peddling content that was fake. The order was withdrawn under pressure.
- **More recently the Government proposed a series of rules under the IT Act to check digital news content.**
- **State Governments like Kerala and Rajasthan had come out with their own versions** of proposed rules which were withdrawn under pressure and criticism.
- **The most infamous move to control the press** before the advent of private news channels was by former **prime minister Rajiv Gandhi** when he **proposed the Defamation Bill in 1988.**
- Under pressure from a unified media and several sections of the public, the Bill was withdrawn.