



Central Media Accreditation Guidelines 2022

For Prelims: Central Media Accreditation Guidelines, contempt of court, defamation

For Mains: Freedom of Media & Democracy, Fourth Pillar of Democracy

Why in News?

Recently, the Central government has released the **Central Media Accreditation Guidelines-2022**.

- Applications for accreditation are vetted by a **Central Press Accreditation Committee** headed by the DG, PIB.
- At present, there are 2,457 PIB-accredited journalists in the country.

What are the Provisions under Guidelines?

- **Provisions to Withdraw/Suspend Accreditation:**
 - 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.
 - If **actions are prejudicial to decency, or morality**, or in relation to **contempt of court, defamation** or incitement to an offence.
 - **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.
- **Provisions for Granting Accreditation:**
 - Accreditation is **only available for journalists living in the Delhi NCR region**. There are multiple categories.
 - A journalist **needs to have a minimum five years' professional experience** as a full-time working journalist or a cameraperson in a news organisation, or a minimum of 15 years as a freelancer to become eligible.
 - **Veteran journalists**, with over 30 years of experience, and who are older than 65 years of age, too are eligible.
 - A **newspaper or a periodical** needs to have a **minimum daily circulation of 10,000**, and news agencies must have at least 100 subscribers. Similar rules apply for foreign news organisations and foreign journalists.
 - Journalists working with **digital news platforms** are also eligible, provided the website has a **minimum of 10 lakh unique visitors per month**.
 - **No accreditation** will be granted to freelance journalists working for foreign news media organisations.
- **Central Media Accreditation Committee (CMAC):**
 - The Government shall **constitute a Committee** called the **Central Media Accreditation Committee**.
 - The Committee will be chaired by the **Principal Director General, Press Information Bureau (PIB)** and composed of up to **25 members** nominated by the government to

- discharge the functions laid down under these guidelines.
- The CMAC would **function for a period of two years** from the date of its first meeting and shall **meet once in a quarter or more frequently**, if necessary.

What are the associated Concerns?

- The guidelines leave it to the **discretion of government nominated officials** to assess **what is defamatory or prejudicial to the sovereignty or integrity of India** while deciding on whether a journalist's accreditation should be suspended or withdrawn.
 - One of the **core responsibilities of a journalist** is to **expose wrongdoing**, whether by public officials, politicians, big businessmen, corporate groups, or other people in power.
 - This could result, at times, in such powers trying to intimidate journalists or to block information from coming out.
- Journalists often **report on issues and policy decisions** that the government may not like.
- Any investigative story on sensitive issues could be held to be in violation of any of these provisions.

How does Accreditation Help?

- **Allow Access to Big Events:**
 - In certain events where VVIPs or dignitaries such as the President, the Vice President or the Prime Minister are present, only accredited journalists are allowed to report from the premises.
- **Help in Protecting Identities:**
 - Second, accreditation ensures that a journalist is able to **protect the identity of his or her sources**.
 - An accredited journalist **does not have to disclose who he or she intends to meet** when entering offices of union ministries, as the accreditation card is **"valid for entry into buildings under MHA (Ministry of Home Affairs) security zone"**.
- **Benefits the Journalist:**
 - Accreditation **brings certain benefits for the journalist** and his or her family, like being included in the **Central Government Health Scheme**, and some concessions on railway tickets.

What are the Constitutional Provisions related to Freedom of Press?

- The Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression under **Article 19**, which deals with **Protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech**, etc.
- Freedom of the press is **not expressly protected by the Indian legal system** but it is impliedly protected under article **19(1) (a) of the constitution**.
 - However, Freedom of the press is also **not absolute**.
 - A law could impose only those restrictions on the exercise of this right, it faces certain restrictions under **article 19(2)**, which is as follows:
 - Sovereignty and integrity of India, Security of the State, Friendly relations with foreign States, Public order, decency or morality or in Contempt of court, Defamation, Incitement to an offence.

[Source:TH](#)

