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Statutory Accountability Bodies and Historic Institutions

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Statutory Accountability Bodies and Historic Institutions

Some government bodies exist to keep the government honest. They fight corruption and force open files. Others are old institutions that have run since colonial times. This article explains both kinds. It shows how the CVC punishes, how the CIC prevents, and why India kept so much of its old machinery after 1947.

> **1964** CVC set up by executive order.
> **2003** CVC gets statutory status.
> **2005** Central Information Commission created.
> **1905** Railway Board, the oldest body here.

CVC: Central Vigilance Commission: India's main anti-corruption watchdog.

CIC: Central Information Commission: enforces the RTI Act.

Statutory body: Created by an Act of Parliament.

Executive body: Created by government order alone.

1 Chapter 1: The CVC and the CIC

Must Know

The CVC: fighting corruption

- The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) was created in 1964.
- It oversees corruption cases in central government departments.
- It is the government's main anti-corruption watchdog.

- It investigates complaints and advises departments.
- It recommends action against officials who did wrong.
- It acts after the corruption has already happened.
- Read more: Central Vigilance Commission.

How the CVC began

- The Santhanam Committee recommended it.
- A 1964 executive order set it up.
- It ran as a purely executive body for nearly four decades.
- Parliament gave it statutory status through the CVC Act in 2003.

The CIC: enforcing transparency

- The Central Information Commission (CIC) was created in 2005.
- It enforces citizens' right to information.
- State Information Commissions do the same job in the states.
- A public authority may refuse an RTI request.
- The citizen can then appeal to the Information Commission.
- The Commission can order that the information actually be handed over.
- It also acts as a preventive tool.
- When government information is open by default, corruption is harder to hide.

Remember: CVC: Santhanam Committee, 1964 executive order, statutory in 2003. CIC: 2005, RTI.

> **Quick check 1.** The Central Vigilance Commission was a statutory body from the day it was created in 1964. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick check 2. The Central Information Commission mainly punishes corruption after it has happened. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

2 Chapter 2: UGC, Tax Boards and the Railway Board

Must Know

UGC and the tax boards

Body	Year	Job
University Grants Commission (UGC)	1956	Coordinates and maintains standards in higher education.
Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)	1963 Act; operational 1 Jan 1964	Direct-tax administration.
Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC)	1963 Act; operational 1 Jan 1964	Indirect-tax administration.

- Both boards came from the Central Boards of Revenue Act, 1963.
- Between them they run India's income tax, excise and customs.
- Remember the trio: UGC in 1956 for education, CBDT and CBEC in 1964 for taxes.
- Read more: Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT).

The Railway Board: a colonial holdover

- The Railway Board dates from 1905.
- It is the oldest body in this group.
- It oversees the whole railway system.

- It is more than four decades older than Independence.
- In 1947, India kept the structure instead of starting over.
- The railways were already running under the Board.
- Its origin shows how working institutions trace back to colonial administration.

> **Quick check 3.** The Railway Board is older than Independence, dating from 1905. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

3 Chapter 3: How These Bodies Fit Together

Good to Know

From executive to statutory

- Many bodies start by government order.
- Later, Parliament gives them statutory status through an Act.

- The CVC is the clearest case: executive in 1964, statutory in 2003.
- A statutory body is more secure.
- It takes a real law to change or abolish it.
- The 2003 upgrade gave the CVC lasting legal standing.
- Institutions in India often start informally and grow stronger over time.

Two-pronged accountability

Body	Tool	When it acts
CVC	Investigates and recommends punishment	After corruption happens
CIC	Orders disclosure of information	Before, by keeping things visible

- Prevention is often cheaper than punishment.
- Say an official takes a bribe. The CVC investigates and can recommend punishment.
- But if the files had been open, the bribe might never have been offered.
- That is the CIC's logic.
- The CVC punishes; the CIC prevents. Together they cover both ends of one problem.

The limits of these bodies

- They depend on officials acting on their reports and orders.
- Anti-corruption work can overlap between the CVC, the CBI and the Lokpal.
- If the CVC and CBI both examine one case, the overlap can delay the outcome.
- Neither body then holds clear sole authority.

- Read more: Lokpal: India's Anti-Corruption Ombudsman and CBI: Central Bureau of Investigation.

Why continuity matters

- India's administrative state was not rebuilt from scratch in 1947.
- Many working institutions were kept and adapted.
- The courts, the railways and the tax system all carried on under the new government.
- That let the country function from day one.
- It is a useful essay angle: continuity versus a new start.

> **Quick check 4.** The CVC and the CBI can overlap on the same corruption case. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

4 Chapter 4: Current Affairs, 2026

Great to Know

The Income-tax Act, 2025

- The Income-tax Act, 2025 came into force on 1 April 2026.
- It replaced the Income-tax Act, 1961, after roughly six decades.
- The CBDT notified the Income-tax Rules, 2026 in March 2026.
- It now runs day-to-day administration under the new Act.
- The CBDT calls the new Act a structural simplification, with a streamlined format and simpler language.
- Tax policy itself stayed broadly unchanged.
- This shows a board adapting to a brand-new governing law.
- Source: Business Today.

5 Previous Year Questions

Exam angle: a real question.

Quick Q&A

- **CVC set up?** 1964 (Santhanam Committee).
- **CVC statutory?** 2003.
- **CIC created?** 2005.
- **UGC year?** 1956.
- **Oldest body here?** Railway Board, 1905.

Practice MCQs

1. What does the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) oversee?

A. India's railway safety inspections

B. India's foreign trade agreements

C. University degree accreditation standards

D. Corruption cases in central government departments

See answer ↓

2. What do the Central Information Commission and State Information Commissions enforce?

A. Railway ticket pricing rules

B. University admission quotas

C. Citizens' right to information requests

D. India's income tax collection rules

See answer ↓

3. What does the CVC's gap between its 1964 founding and its 2003 statutory status show?

A. Statutory status has no connection to a body's legal footing

B. The CVC did not exist at all before 2003

C. A body can operate informally for decades before Parliament gives it stronger legal footing

D. Parliament created the CVC and gave it statutory status on the exact same day

See answer ↓

4. What do the CVC and CIC together represent as a pair?

A. Two identical bodies performing exactly the same function

B. Bodies with no connection to accountability whatsoever

C. A single combined body split only for administrative convenience

D. Two different accountability tools: the CVC targets corruption directly, while the CIC enforces transparency as a preventive measure

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **D.** The Central Vigilance Commission has a specific oversight role. It oversees corruption cases. These cases occur in central government departments. ↑ Q1
2. **C.** The Central Information Commission and State Information Commissions have a specific role. They enforce citizens' right to information requests. This role was formalized in 2005. ↑ Q2
3. **C.** The CVC's gap between 1964 and 2003 shows something important. A body can operate informally for decades. It later gains stronger legal footing once Parliament gives it statutory status. ↑ Q3
4. **D.** The CVC and CIC together represent two different accountability tools. The CVC targets corruption directly. The CIC enforces transparency as a preventive measure against it. ↑ Q4

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** ↑ 1
2. **False.** ↑ 2
3. **True.** ↑ 3
4. **True.** ↑ 4

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