Election Commission of India (ECI)

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Why in News?

Recently, SC Judge emphasized that the independence of the Election Commission of India is central to ensuring neutrality in elections, warning that dependence on contestants undermines credibility.

- The Election Commission of India is an ***autonomous constitutional authority*** responsible for administering ***Union and State election processes*** in India.
- **Role -** The body administers elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies in India, and the offices of the President and Vice President in the country.
- **Established in** – The Election Commission was established in accordance with the Constitution on **25th January 1950.**
- **Structure -** It is a ***3-member body*** made up of one Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and 2 Election Commissioners (ECs).
- **Appointment of Commissioners**
  - The **President** appoints Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners.
  - **Tenure -** They have tenure of 6 years, or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
  - **Equivalent status -** They enjoy the same status and receive salary and perks as available to ***Judges of the Supreme Court of India.***
  - **Removal -** The Chief Election Commissioner can be removed from office in like manner and on like grounds as a ***judge of the Supreme Court.***
- **Constitutional Basis**

Part XV of the Constitution (Articles 324–329) deals with elections	
Article 324	Superintendence, direction, and control of elections vested in ECI.

Article 325	No exclusion from electoral rolls based on religion, race, caste, sex.
Article 326	Adult suffrage as the basis of elections.
Article 327	Parliament empowered to legislate on elections.
Article 328	State legislatures may legislate on elections.
Article 329	Courts barred from interfering in electoral matters.

- **Functions**
- **Administrative –** Allots election symbols and grants recognition to National and State political parties.
- **Quasi-Judicial –** Settles disputes regarding the recognition of parties and allotment of symbols.
- **Advisory –** Advises the President (for MPs) and Governors (for MLAs) on the disqualification of members (except under the Anti-Defection Law).
- **Regulatory –** Enforces the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and monitors candidate election expenditure.

Panchayats and Municipalities are handled by State Election Commissions (Art 243K/243ZA).

- **Safeguards for Independence – Removal (CEC) –** Can only be removed from office in a manner like a Supreme Court Judge (proven misbehaviour or incapacity via Parliament).
- **Removal (ECs) –** Cannot be removed except on the specific recommendation of the CEC.
- **Conditions of Service –** The conditions of service of the CEC cannot be varied to their disadvantage after appointment.

Technology Integration	
EVMs & VVPATs	Tamper-proof voting, verifiable paper trail.
cVIGIL App	Citizen’s report MCC violations.
ERONet & NVSP	Online voter registration.
Suvidha & Samadhan	Candidate permissions, grievance redressal.
Garuda App	Digital verification by Booth Level Officers.

References

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2. ECI | ECI
3. Live Law | ECI

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