

Central Administrative Tribunal - CAT, Composition, Mandate, Jurisdiction

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The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), established under the **Administrative Tribunals Act of 1985**, provides a specialized platform for resolving central and state government employees' service-related grievances. Rooted in historical calls for administrative tribunals, CAT was set up based on recommendations from the **Law Commission (1958)** and the **Administrative Reforms Commission (1969)**, under **Article 323-A** of the Indian Constitution.

CAT is a **quasi-judicial body** that handles cases on recruitment, service conditions, and grievances for over 215 central government bodies. Its 19 principal benches enable regional access, with the Principal Bench in New Delhi.

Central Administrative Tribunal

The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) is a quasi-judicial body in India established under the **Administrative Tribunals Act of 1985**. Its primary function is to resolve grievances of central and state government employees regarding their service matters, providing a mechanism for speedy and effective justice. The concept of administrative tribunals in India dates back to 1941 with the establishment of the **Income Tax Appellate Tribunal**.

After independence, the need for a specialized forum for service-related disputes grew. The Law Commission (1958) and Administrative Reforms Commission (1969) recommended tribunals to reduce judicial caseloads, especially for government employment issues.

- **Legislative Action:** Based on these recommendations, the **Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985** was enacted, effective from **July 1, 1985**, establishing a platform for public servants to address grievances related to recruitment and service conditions.
- **Constitutional Basis:** The CAT was founded under **Article 323-A of the Indian Constitution**, empowering Parliament to set up tribunals for adjudicating disputes concerning public services.

Central Administrative Tribunal Composition

The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) comprises a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Members, appointed by the **President of India** based on recommendations from a selection committee and each playing a distinct role in its operations. The **Chairperson**, as the highest authority, must be a **sitting or retired High Court judge**, appointed for a five-year term or until reaching the age of 65.

- **Members:** CAT benches consist of one **Judicial Member** and one **Administrative Member**, blending legal expertise with administrative insights. At Present it includes 69 members (34 Judicial and 35 Administrative).
 - Judicial Members are qualified similarly to **High Court judges** and focus on legal interpretation and fair justice.
 - Administrative Members, with significant public administration experience, address service-related issues in the government sector.
- Members are appointed by the **President of India** based on recommendations from a selection committee, which includes the **Chief Justice of India** or a nominee, a senior **Supreme Court judge**, and a Ministry representative, ensuring merit-based selection.

Central Administrative Tribunal Mandate

The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), established under the **Administrative Tribunals Act of 1985** as per **Article 323-A** of the Indian Constitution, provides a specialized forum for resolving disputes related to recruitment and service conditions for public sector employees.

- **Objectives:** Aiming for speedy and **cost-effective justice**, the Central Administrative Tribunal alleviates the burden on traditional courts, providing timely resolutions that are crucial for public servants.
- **Functions:** Its core functions include adjudicating issues like recruitment processes, promotions, transfers, disciplinary actions, and other service grievances for central government employees, including those in public sector undertakings (PSUs) notified under the Act.
- **Natural justice:** It operates on principles of **natural justice**, allowing flexibility in procedure by not adhering strictly to the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) (earlier known as **Civil Procedure Code**).
- **Appeal:** It possesses High Court-like powers in **contempt** proceedings and can establish its own procedural rules, with appeals from CAT orders directed to **High Courts** through Writ Petition under **Article 226/227**.

- Earlier, appeals were directed to the Supreme Court, but a 1997 Supreme Court judgment allowed High Courts to review CAT decisions.
- This process provides an additional layer of judicial oversight over CAT rulings.

Central Administrative Tribunal Jurisdiction

The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) has jurisdiction over a wide range of service-related issues for central government employees, including All India Services, Union civil servants, and certain PSUs, as per Section 14(2) of the Administrative Tribunals Act. It currently covers around **215** central government organizations, ministries, and departments.

- This includes recruitment issues, conditions of service like pay, pensions, promotions, and disciplinary actions, ensuring a dedicated platform for grievance redressal at any employment stage.
- **Exclusion:** However, certain categories, like **armed forces personnel, Supreme Court employees, and Parliament staff**, are excluded from its purview.
- **Benches:** The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) operates through **19 principal benches** and **21 circuit benches** across India, ensuring that public servants have regional accessibility to justice.
 - The **Principal Bench** is situated in **New Delhi**, which serves as the central hub for significant matters related to the Government of the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi.

Central Administrative Tribunal UPSC PYQs

Question 1: The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) which was established for redressal of grievances and complaints by or against central government employees nowadays is exercising its power as an independent judicial authority. Explain. **(UPSC Mains 2019)**

Question 2: Consider the following statements: **(UPSC Prelims 2009)**

1. Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) was set up during the Prime Ministership of Lal Bahadur Shastri.
2. The Members for CAT are drawn from both judicial and administrative streams.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)

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