

GENERAL STUDIES II

Kerala PSC Removal Row 2026: Article 317 for UPSC

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The Kerala Public Service Commission removal controversy reported in October 2026 has renewed attention on the constitutional safeguards governing State Public Service Commissions. The uploaded report describes a recommendation attributed to the Kerala Governor concerning the commission's chairperson and members amid allegations of recruitment irregularities. Under Article 316, State PSC members are appointed by the Governor, while Article 317 reserves removal powers to the President, subject to specific constitutional procedures. This Civil Service Gurukul explainer examines Articles 315-320, the Supreme Court's inquiry role, institutional independence, accountability and important UPSC Prelims and GS Paper II questions. The reported allegations are not treated as established findings.

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UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS | INDIAN POLITY | OCTOBER 2026

Understand the constitutional distinction between appointment and removal of State Public Service Commission members, the Supreme Court inquiry safeguard and the implications for institutional independence.

Published: 27 October 2026**Prepared by:** Civil Service Gurukul Research Desk**Brief Summary / Executive Overview**

The Kerala Public Service Commission controversy reported in October 2026 has brought attention to the constitutional protection of State Public Service Commission members. The supplied report describes a recommendation concerning the chairperson and members amid allegations of recruitment irregularities. The central legal issue is the difference between appointment by the

Governor under Article 316 and removal by the President under Article 317.

UPSC Syllabus Relevance

GS Paper II: Constitutional bodies, Governor, accountability, judicial oversight and governance.

GS Paper IV: Institutional integrity, public ethics and constitutional propriety.

Prelims: Articles 315–320, appointment, tenure, removal and functions of Public Service Commission.

Constitutional Body

State PSC

Appointment

Governor

Removal Authority

President

Key Provision

Article 317

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1. Why Is the Kerala PSC Removal Controversy in the News?

A controversy concerning the Kerala Public Service Commission was reported in late October 2026.

The supplied article describes a recommendation attributed to former Kerala Governor Rajendra Arlekar concerning removal of the commission's chairperson and members amid allegations of recruitment irregularities.

The report also describes differing political responses to the recommendation.

These allegations and responses should not be confused with a final finding of misconduct or a completed constitutional removal process.

For UPSC aspirants, the central issue is which constitutional authority can appoint or remove a State PSC member.

2. Constitutional Provisions: Articles 315–320

Public Service Commissions are constitutional institutions intended to support fair and merit-based public recruitment.

Article	Constitutional Subject
Article 315	Public Service Commissions for the Union and states
Article 316	Appointment and term of office of members
Article 317	Removal and suspension of members
Article 318	Power to make regulations concerning conditions of service and staff
Article 319	Restrictions on holding certain offices after ceasing to be a member
Article 320	Functions of Public Service Commissions

These provisions create an institutional framework intended to balance independence with public accountability.

3. Who Appoints State Public Service Commission Members?

Under Article 315, the Governor appoints the chairperson and other members of a State Public Service Commission.

The appointment power does not automatically include a corresponding power to remove members at the Governor's discretion.

Tenure

A State PSC member generally holds office for six years or until reaching the age of 62 years, whichever occurs earlier, subject to the constitutional provisions governing the office.

Tenure protection is intended to reduce the risk of arbitrary interference in recruitment institutions.

4. Can the Governor Remove a State PSC Chairperson?

The Governor cannot directly remove a State Public Service Commission chairperson or member through an independent removal order.

Article 317 provides the relevant constitutional framework.

Removal on the ground of misbehaviour

Under Article 317(1), the President refers the matter to the Supreme Court for inquiry.

If the Supreme Court, after conducting the inquiry, reports that the member ought to be removed on the ground of misbehaviour, the President may issue the removal order.

Other specified grounds

Article 317(3) separately permits presidential removal in specified circumstances, including insolvency, certain paid employment outside official duties and incapacity due to infirmity of mind or body.

These grounds should not be confused with the misbehaviour inquiry procedure under Article 317(1).

Suspension pending inquiry

Under Article 317(2), the Governor may suspend a State PSC chairperson or member in respect of whom a reference has been made to the Supreme Court under Article 317(1), pending the President's order.

Most Important UPSC Fact: The Governor appoints State PSC members, but removals governed by Article 317 and exercised by the President. Misbehaviour-based removal requires the prescribed Supreme Court inquiry.

5. Governor vs President: Important Comparison

Issue	Governor	President
Appointment of State PSC Members	Appoints under Article 316	Not the appointing authority for a State PSC
Removal of State PSC Members	Cannot directly remove	Removal authority under Article 317
Misbehaviour Inquiry	Does not replace the Supreme Court inquiry	Refers the matter to the Supreme Court
Suspension Pending Inquiry	May suspend after the Article 317(1) reference, subject to Article 317(2)	Issues the final order under the applicable constitutional process

6. UPSC GS Paper II Analysis: Independence vs Accountability

The constitutional design deliberately separates the appointment and removal mechanisms for State Public Service Commission members.

This distinction helps protect recruitment bodies from arbitrary removal or political retaliation.

Why independence matters

- Recruitment should be based on merit rather than political favour.
- Members should be able to perform their duties without fear of arbitrary removal.
- Stable tenure can support continuity in recruitment administration.
- Institutional credibility is important for candidates and public confidence.

Why accountability also matters

- Allegations of examination irregularities require credible investigation.

- Evidence should be preserved and examined fairly.
- Individual responsibility should be distinguished from collective allegations.
- Applicants should have access to appropriate grievance mechanisms.

Constitutional protection is not immunity from investigation.

Rather, it requires accountability through the procedure established by the Constitution.

7. Way Forward: Strengthening Public Service Commissions

1. Introduce transparent recruitment audit trails.
2. Use secure and tamper-resistant examination processes.
3. Ensure independent examination forensics where irregularities are alleged.
4. Maintain reliable evidence preservation and chain-of-custody procedure.
5. Follow Article 317 for constitutionally protected removal decisions.
6. Provide transparent grievance and correction mechanisms for candidates.
7. Protect whistleblowers and support fair investigations.
8. Balance institutional autonomy with public accountability.

UPSC Mains Conclusion: The independence of constitutional institutions and accountability for misconduct are complementary principles. The legitimacy of any action against a State PSC member depends on evidence, due process and adherence to Article 317.

8. UPSC Prelims Quick Revision

Question	Answer
Which Article provides for Public Service Commissions?	Article 315
Who appoints State PSC members?	Governor
Which Article governs appointment and tenure?	Article 316
Who removes State PSC members?	President
Which Article governs removal?	Article 317
Who conducts the misbehaviour inquiry?	Supreme Court, on presidential reference
What is the usual maximum age for a State PSC member?	62 years
Which Article deals with PSC functions?	Article 320

9. UPSC Prelims Practice MCQs

Question 1.

For removal of a State Public Service Commission member on the ground of misbehaviour, which of the following is required under Article 317?

- A. Approval of the State Cabinet alone.
- B. An independent order of the Governor.
- C. A presidential order following a Supreme Court inquiry on reference.
- D. Approval by the State Election Commission.

Correct Answer: C

Article 317(1) provides for a Supreme Court inquiry on presidential reference before removal on the ground of misbehaviour.

Question 2.

Consider the following statements:

1. The Governor appoints the members of a State Public Service Commission.
2. The Governor may directly remove a State PSC member for misbehaviour without a Supreme Court inquiry.
3. The President is the removal authority under Article 317.

Which statements are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: B

Statements 1 and 3 are correct. Statement 2 is incorrect because misbehaviour-based removal requires the procedure prescribed by Article 317.

Question 3.

Which of the following Articles deals with the functions of Public Service Commissions?

- A. Article 315

- B. Article 316
- C. Article 317
- D. Article 320

Correct Answer: D

Article 320 deals with the functions of Public Service Commissions.

Question 4.

Under Article 317(2), when may the Governor suspend a State PSC member?

- A. Whenever the State Cabinet requests suspension.
- B. After a reference has been made to the Supreme Court under Article 317(1), pending the President's order.
- C. Whenever a newspaper reports allegations.
- D. Only after the member's term has expired.

Correct Answer: B

Article 317(2) permits suspension in respect of a member whose case has been referred to the Supreme Court under Article 317(1), pending the President's order.

10. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question 1 – GS Paper II

Explain how the Constitution balances independence and accountability of State Public Service Commissions.

Suggested Answer Framework:

1. Introduce the constitutional status of PSCs.
2. Explain appointment and tenure under Article 316.
3. Discuss removal safeguards under Article 317.
4. Analyse institutional autonomy and accountability.
5. Conclude with transparent recruitment and due process.

Question 2 – GS Paper II

Discuss the constitutional limitations on the Governor's role in the appointment, suspension and removal of State Public Service Commission members.

Suggested Answer Framework:

1. Explain gubernatorial appointment powers.
2. Distinguish suspension from removal.
3. Describe the President's role and Supreme Court inquiry.
4. Explain the importance of constitutional propriety.

Question 3 – GS Paper IV

How should a constitutional institution respond to serious allegations of recruitment irregularities while protecting fairness and institutional credibility?

Suggested Answer Framework:

1. Identify the ethical principles of fairness and integrity.
2. Explain impartial investigation and evidence preservation.
3. Discuss candidate rights and institutional independence.
4. Recommend transparent grievance and corrective procedures.

11. Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Kerala PSC removal controversy?

The published October 2026 report describes a recommendation concerning Kerala Public Service Commission members amid allegations of recruitment irregularities. It raises questions about the constitutional procedure for removal.

Is Kerala PSC the same as Karnataka PSC?

No. The reported controversy concerns the Kerala Public Service Commission.

Can the Governor directly remove a State PSC chairperson?

No. Removal is governed by Article 317, with the President as the removal authority.

Who appoints State PSC members?

The Governor appoints the chairperson and members under Article 316.

What is Article 317 of the Constitution?

Article 317 governs removal and suspension of Public Service Commission members, including the Supreme Court inquiry mechanism for removal on the ground of misbehaviour.

Are the reported recruitment allegations proven?

The supplied report describes allegations and investigation, not a final judicial determination.

Why is this topic important for UPSC?

It connects constitutional bodies, Governor's powers, judicial oversight, institutional independence and GS Paper II governance.

12. Conclusion

The Kerala PSC controversy illustrates a central feature of India's constitutional design: appointment powers and removal powers need not belong to the same authority.

State PSC members are appointed by the Governor, while Article 317 provides protected removal procedures involving the President and, for misbehaviour-based removal, the Supreme Court.

For UPSC aspirants, the most important lesson is that constitutional accountability must follow the procedure established by law.

Kerala PSC

Article 317

Governor's powers

President

Indian Polity

Constitutional Bodies

GS Paper II

UPSC Prelims

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Editorial Note: This is an educational explainer based on the supplied October 2026 report. The reported recommendation and recruitment allegations have not been independently verified for this article. They should not be treated as proof of misconduct or a completed removal order. This publication is not an official UPSC or government notice.

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