

DISTRICT COLLECTOR

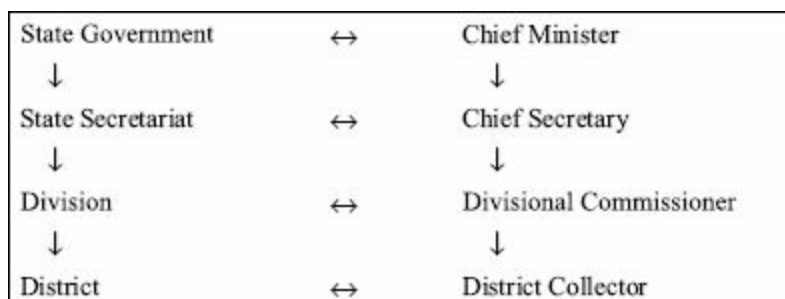
Position

A District Collector is also called a Deputy Commissioner in Karnataka, Assam, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir and Haryana, and District Magistrate in West Bangal and Uttar Pradesh. The office of a District Collector is called as the Collectorate.

A District Collector is the head of district administration and the official agent of the state government in the district. The office of a District Collector is a unique as it has no parallels in the administrative systems of other countries except the office of Prefect in France. In France, the Prefect is the head of the department (i.e. the largest territorial unit of administration in France) and an official agent of the Central Government. The office of Prefect is called as the Prefecture. Hence the French Prefect is considered as the nearest analogue of the District Collector in India.

The Revenue and General Administration Department and the Registration Department of the district administration are directly under the charge of District Collector. But his control, supervision and influence extend to all the other departments of district administration. He is a multi-purpose functionary around whom revolves the entire administration of the district.

The District Collector belongs to the General Administration Department of the state government (i.e. the State Secretariat) which is headed politically by the Chief Minister and administratively by the Chief Secretary. The collector is controlled and supervised by Divisional Commissioner. The place of Collector in the administrative system of a state can be illustrated by the following diagram.



Evolution

District is the basic geographical (i.e. territorial) unit of administration in India. The term 'District' is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "a territory marked off for special administrative purposes."

Originally, the Constitution of India made no mention of the term ‘district’ except in Article 233, which mentioned the term ‘district judges.’ But the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts of 1992 included the term district in the constitution at many places under Part IX and IXA which dealt with Panchayats and municipalities respectively.

“District Administration,” in the words of S.S. Khera, “is the total management of public affairs within this unit.... District Administration is that portion of public administration which functions within the territorial limits of a district.”

District as a territorial unit of administration in India has a long history beginning with the Mauryan Era. During the Mughal rule, a district was called *Sarkar* and it was headed by *Karori-Faujdar*, a military officer who functioned under the direct control of a *Subedar*.

The present day district administration and the office of District Collector came into existence in India under the British East India Company. This office was created in 1772 by Warren Hastings, the then Governor-General of India. In 1787, the Collector was made responsible for civil justice and magistracy in addition to revenue collection. He was a very powerful functionary and was described as a ‘Little Napoleon’.

The Indian Statutory Commission (the Simon Commission–1930) remarked that the district collector “is in the eyes of most of its inhabitants, the government” while Ramsay MacDonald compared the District Collector to a tortoise on whose back stood the elephant of the Government of India. Lord Wavel said that the English would be remembered not by this institution or that, but by the ideals left behind in the form of the office of the District Collector.

After Independence, the office of District Collector suffered in terms of status and authority due to the following factors.

- (i) Expansion in the sphere of governmental activities and functions due to the replacement of ‘police state’ by ‘welfare state’.
- (ii) Change in the form of government, that is, adoption of parliamentary government both at the Centre and in states.
- (iii) Change in the ends and objectives of the government, that is, welfare-orientation replaced colonial exploitation.
- (iv) The emergence of Panchayati Raj as a unit of local administration.
- (v) Separation of judiciary from the executive.
- (vi) Increasing political consciousness among people.
- (vii) The emergence and growth of a large number of departments in the district.
- (viii) Replacement of ICS by IAS.
- (ix) Role and influence of pressure groups and political parties.
- (x) Rise of Commissionerate system of law and order administration in big cities.

Role and Functions

The role played and the functions performed by the District Collector in district administration can be studied under the following heads.

Revenue Administration Historically, collection of revenue has been the first charge (function) of the District Collector as the very title Collector signifies. He is still the head of revenue administration in the district. He is responsible for the collection of revenue to the state government through the Board of Revenue or Revenue Tribunal in Maharashtra and Gujarat or Financial

Commissioner in Punjab, Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir. As the head of revenue administration in district, the Collector is responsible for the following functions.

- (i) To collect land revenue.
- (ii) To collect other government dues.
- (iii) To distribute and recover taccavi loans.
- (iv) To maintain land records.
- (v) To collect rural statistics.
- (vi) To exercise the power of land acquisition officer, that is, acquiring land for the purpose of colonisation, industry, slum clearance, capital construction and so on.
- (vii) To implement land reforms.
- (viii) To look after the welfare of the agriculturists.
- (ix) To make an assessment of losses of crops and recommend relief during natural calamities like fire, drought and flood.
- (x) To supervise treasury and sub-treasury.
- (ix) To enforce Stamp Act.
- (xii) To pay rehabilitation grant.
- (xiii) To manage government estates.
- (xiv) To hear revenue appeals against the orders of lower authorities.
- (xv) To pay *Zamindari* abolition compensation.

Law and Order Administration The maintenance of law and order in district is the principal duty of the District Collector. Before Independence, the District Collector acted as both, the Executive Magistrate and the Judicial Magistrate. As an Executive Magistrate, he was responsible for the maintenance of law and order and as a Judicial Magistrate, he was responsible for the trial of criminal and civil cases by interpreting the laws. After Independence, the judiciary has been separated from the executive in accordance with Article 50 of the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Indian Constitution. As a consequence, the role of Collector as a judicial magistrate came to an end. This function has been handed over to a new functionary called the district judge who works under the direct control of the State High Court.

The District Collector in his capacity as the district magistrate (i.e. executive magistrate) is ultimately responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the district. For this purpose, the district police force headed by the District Superintendent of Police is kept under the control, supervision and direction of the district magistrate. The Indian Police Act of 1861 vests the police administration of the district in the District Superintendent of Police under the control of the district magistrate. Thus there is a system of dual control of law and order administration in the district, that is, control by the district magistrate and control by the departmental line headed by the Director-General of Police.

The District Collector in his capacity as the district magistrate performs the following functions.

- (i) To control and supervise the subordinate magistracy.
- (ii) To issue orders when there is threat to public peace and order under section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code.
- (iii) To dispose all the petitions received from the government and others.
- (iv) To release prisoners on parole.
- (v) To inspect the jails.
- (vi) To submit an annual criminal report to the government.

- (vii) To grant, suspend or cancel many kinds of licenses like arms, hotel, explosives, petroleum and others.
- (viii) To grant superior classes to prisoners.
- (ix) To supervise and control local bodies.
- (x) To control and direct the action of district police.
- (xi) To enforce Entertainment Tax Act, and Press Act.
- (xii) To call the armed forces to aid and assist the civil administration to deal with any abnormal situation in the district.
- (xiii) To prosecute offenders under the Factories Act and Trademark Act.
- (xiv) To order disposal of unclaimed property.
- (xv) To recommend schemes for the development of forests.

Development Administration Before Independence, the developmental role of a Collector was, not that important as British India was a ‘police state’ concerned mainly with the regulatory administration. After Independence and with the initiation of development planning strategy, the developmental role of a Collector became significant. He has become a pivotal figure in the implementation of development programmes. However, the position in this regard is not same in all the states. Broadly, there have emerged two distinct patterns of development administration in the district. One is the Tamilnadu, Rajasthan and other states’ pattern and the other is the Maharashtra and Gujarat Pattern.

In the first pattern the Collector is made responsible both for regulatory and development administration. As such, he looks after revenue, magisterial and developmental activities in these states. All the district level officers engaged in the implementation of development programmes function under the supervision, guidance and leadership of the Collector. Even though, in technical matters they function under the control and supervision of their respective departments, in the actual implementation of their development programmes they are placed under the administrative control of the District Collector. In many states, the Collector is also designated as the District Development Officer and is authorised to write the Annual Confidential Report of the District level officers engaged in the development administration.

In the second pattern found in Maharashtra and Gujarat, the Collector is made responsible only for regulatory administration. The development administration in these states is made the responsibility of the Zila Parishad. All the District level officers engaged in the implementation of development programmes function under the administrative control and supervision of the Zila Parishad. For this purpose, the Zila Parishad has appointed the District Development Officer (or chief executive officer) who also belongs to the IAS. By this arrangement, the Collector is relieved of his responsibility in the developmental field.

An important dimension of the role of the Collector in the developmental field is his association with the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA). It should be noted here that the chief role of a Collector in the field of development administration is that of coordination—coordinating the activities of district level officers engaged in the implementation of development programmes.

However, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 and the consequent Panchayati Raj Acts of 1993 and 1994 of various states have reduced the role of Collector in development administration.

Other Powers and Functions In addition to the above, the Collector also performs the following functions.

- (i) He acts as the Returning Officer for elections to parliamentary and state assembly

constituencies. Hence, he coordinates the election work at the district level.

- (ii) He acts as the District Census officer. Hence, he conducts the census operations once in ten years.
- (iii) He acts as the Chief Protocol Officer in a district.
- (iv) He presides over the District Plan Implementation Committee.
- (v) He acts as the official representative of the state government during ceremonial functions in the district.
- (vi) He acts as a kind of buffer between citizens and administration in the district.
- (vii) He supervises the municipal administration in the district.
- (viii) He acts as the Public Relations Officer of the government.
- (ix) He acts as the crisis administrator-in-chief during natural calamities and other emergencies.
- (x) As a head of district administration, he deals with personnel matters of the district staff.
- (ix) He is responsible for civil supplies—food and other essential commodities.
- (xii) He handles work pertaining to civil defence.
- (xiii) He maintains liaison with military authorities and looks after the welfare of both serving and retired members of the armed forces.

The Collectorate

A Collectorate is the office of District Collector located in the headquarter of the district. It is divided into various sections. Each section helps the Collector in the performance of his functions and fulfilment of his administrative responsibilities. The following are some of the sections of a typical Collectorate.

- Accounts Section
- Civil Supplies Section
- Development Section
- Election Section
- Establishment Section
- General Section
- Housing Section
- Intelligence Section
- Judicial Section
- Land Acquisition Section
- Land Record Section
- Land Reforms Section
- Panchayat Section
- Protocol Section
- Public Relations Section
- Revenue Section
- Rehabilitation Section
- Registration Section

- Statistical Section
- Transport Section

DEPARTMENTAL DISTRICT OFFICIALS

Majority of the state departments are represented at the district level. Each district department has its own head. The heads of these district departments are the technical personnel, that is, specialist civil servants. They are borne on the cadres of specialised state services created on departmental lines. They work under the control and supervision of their respective heads of state department (i.e. Director or Commissioner who head the Directorate). However, the District Collector, as a head of district administration, supervises and coordinates their work. Unlike the other district officials, the collector is a generalist civil servant, usually a member of IAS. The following table shows the departments and their heads in the district.

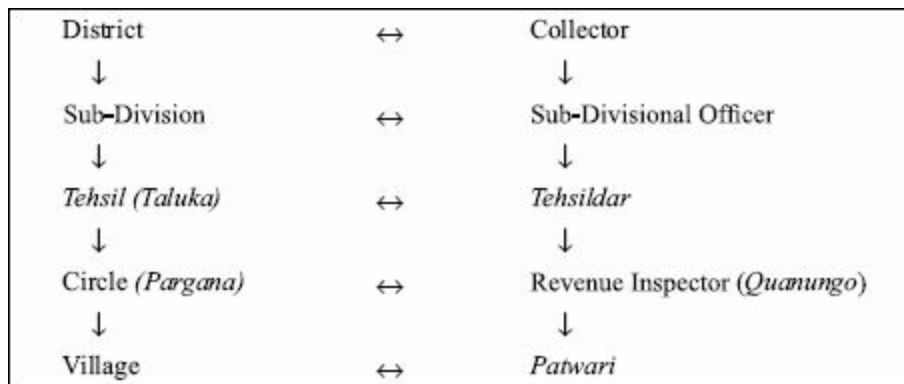
Table 6.1 District Departments and their Heads

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Name of Department</i>	<i>Designation of the District Head</i>
1.	Revenue and General Administration Department	District Collector/Deputy Commissioner/District Magistrate
2.	Registration Department	— do —
3.	Police	Superintendent of Police
4.	Excise	Superintendent of Excise/District Excise Officer
5.	Medical	Civil Surgeon/District Medical Officer
6.	Public Health	District Health Officer
7.	Forest	District Forest Officer
8.	Education	Inspector of Schools/District Education Officer
9.	Cooperation	Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies
10.	Agriculture	Assistant Director of Agriculture/ District Agricultural Officer
11.	Industries	Assistant Director of Industries/District Industries Officer
12.	Judicial	District Judge/District and Sessions Judge
13.	Social Welfare	Social Welfare Officer/Backward Classes Welfare Officer
14.	Jails	Superintendent of Jails
15.	Labour	Assistant Commissioner of Labour/District Labour Officer
16.	Public Works	Executive Engineer
17.	Civil Supplies/Rationing	District Food and Civil Supply Officer
18.	Veterinary	District Veterinary Officer/Assistant Director of Veterinary Services
19.	Information/Publicity	District Information Officer/Assistant Director of Publicity
20.	Statistics	District Statistics Officer
21.	Employment	District Employment Officer
22.	Panchayats	District Panchayats Officer

23.	Treasury and Accounts	District Treasury Officer/District Accounts Officer
24.	Planning	District Planning Officer
25.	Sales Tax	District Sales Tax Officer

ADMINISTRATION BELOW THE DISTRICT LEVEL

The District Collector is the head of administration in the district. In the performance of his multifarious tasks he is assisted by the following hierarchy of functionaries.



Sub-Division Under the provisions of the Land Revenue Code and the Criminal Procedure Code, a district is territorially divided into a number of units for the purpose of revenue and criminal administration. The names of these units and their heads (i.e. officials-in-charge of them) differ from state to state as mentioned below in [Table 6.2](#).

Table 6.2 Names of Sub-divisions and their Heads

	<i>States</i>	<i>Units</i>	<i>Heads</i>
(i)	Uttar Pradesh	Sub-Division	Sub-Divisional Officer/Sub-Divisional Magistrate
(ii)	Tamil Nadu	Revenue Division	Revenue Divisional Officer/Sub-Collector
(iii)	Maharashtra	<i>Prant</i>	Prant Officer/Deputy Collector/Assistant Collector

The Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) is either a member of IAS or State Civil (executive or administrative) Service and is appointed and controlled by the state government. Like the District Collector, he is a territorial officer, generalist administrator and a multipurpose functionary. He is vested with revenue, magisterial and executive powers. As the chief executive officer and the official representative of the state government he has to keep in touch with the activities of all departments of the government in the sub-division. He acts, on the one hand, as a link between the District Collector and the tehsildar in revenue matters and, on the other hand, between the district magistrate and the station police officer in matters pertaining to law and order. Thus he is the principal assistant and valuable field aide to the District Collector and is responsible to him for all aspects of administration in the sub-division.

The sub-divisions are of two types—the office type and the touring type. In the first type, which is prevalent in most states, the SDO has a permanent office located within the sub-division itself. In the second type, which is prevalent in few states like UP, the SDO does not maintain an office and

performs his functions as a touring officer. He resides at the district headquarters.

Tehsil Each sub-division is further territorially divided into a number of administrative units. The nomenclatures for these units and their officials-in-charge differ from state to state as mentioned below in [Table 6.3](#).

Table 6.3 Names of Tehsils and their Heads

	<i>States</i>	<i>Units</i>	<i>Heads</i>
(i)	Uttar Pradesh	<i>Tehsil</i>	<i>Tehsildar</i> (assisted by <i>Naib-Tehsildar</i>)
(ii)	Tamil Nadu	<i>Taluk</i>	<i>Tehsildar</i> (assisted by Deputy-Tehsildar)
(iii)	Maharashtra	<i>Taluka/Mahal</i>	<i>Mamlatdar/Mahalkar</i>

A tehsil is the basic unit for various aspects of administration like land revenue, land records, treasury, magistracy and so on. It is described as a ‘Miniature district’ as the offices of various field departments are located within it. However, certain states like Bihar and West Bengal have no tehsils and a sub-division is the unit below the district.

The *Tehsildar* belongs to the state civil service and is an officer of gazetted rank. Like Collector and SDO, he is a territorial officer, a generalist-administrator and a multi-purpose functionary. He is vested with revenue, megisterial and executive powers. He is responsible for collection of revenue as well as maintenance of law and order in the *tehsil*. As a chief executive officer and as an official representative of the state government, he has to keep in touch with the activities of various departments of the government in the tehsil and coordinate their activities.

Circle Each *tehsil* is territorially divided into a number of units for the purpose of revenue administration. The names of these units and the officials in-charge of them differ from state to state as mentioned below in [Table 6.4](#).

Table 6.4 Names of Circles and their Heads

	<i>States</i>	<i>Units</i>	<i>Heads</i>
(i)	Uttar Pradesh	<i>Pargana</i>	<i>Kanungo</i>
(ii)	Tamil Nadu	<i>Firka</i>	Revenue Inspector
(iii)	Maharashtra	Circle	Circle Inspector

The *kanungo*/circle inspector is regarded as the first-line supervisor in the chain of revenue administration. He supervises revenue administration and land records of all the villages under his charge. He is generally appointed by the District Collector.

Village A village is the lowest and the ultimate unit for all administrative and fiscal purposes in all the states. In Tamil Nadu, the most important functionary in a village is called the village headman. He performs revenue, police, and general administrative duties and acts as the representative of the government in the village area. The functionary equal to him in Maharashtra is called as *patel*. In UP, there is no corresponding functionary. The *patwari* in Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh maintains the village revenue accounts and land records. He is thus the village accountant. He is called by various other names in other states, for instance, *lekhpal* in UP, *Karnam* (or *kanak pillai*) in Tamil Nadu and *talati* in Maharashtra. He is called as “the kingpin of revenue

DISTRICT RURAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Functions

A District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) is the principal organ at the district level to manage and oversee the implementation of different anti-poverty programmes of the Union Ministry of Rural Development.

Since their inception in 1980, the administrative cost of the DRDAs were met by setting apart a certain percentage of the allocation from each programme. However, keeping in view the need for an effective agency at the district level to coordinate the anti-poverty programmes, a new centrally sponsored scheme for strengthening the DRDAs was introduced in 1999.

The primary objective of the scheme of DRDA administration is to strengthen and professionalise the DRDAs so that they are able to effectively enhance the quality of implementation of anti-poverty programmes of the Union Ministry of Rural Development.

The DRDAs are also expected to coordinate effectively with the line departments, Panchayati Raj institutions, banks and other financial institutions, the NGOs as well as technical institutions with a view to gathering support and resources required for poverty reduction effort in the district.

The role of DRDAs will be to facilitate the implementation of programmes, to supervise/oversee and monitor progress, to receive and send progress reports and maintain accounts of funds received for various rural development programmes.

The DRDAs are expected to deal only with the anti-poverty programmes of the Union Ministry of Rural Development. If DRDAs are entrusted with programmes of other ministries or those of the state governments, it should be ensured that these have a definite anti-poverty focus.

Organisation

Each district will have its own DRDA. The DRDA would be headed by a project director, who should be of the rank of an Additional District Magistrate. In respect of such states where DRDAs do not have a separate identity, a cell will be created in the zilla parishad to maintain separate accounts so that these are capable of being audited separately.

The chairman of zilla parishad would be the chairman of the governing body of the DRDA. The DRDA shall also have an executive committee.

The staffing structure of the DRDAs includes positions for planning for poverty alleviation, project formulation, social organisation and capacity building, gender concerns, engineering supervision and quality control, project monitoring, accounting and audit functions as well as evaluation and impact studies.

Each DRDA should have the following wings:

- (i) Self-employment Wing
- (ii) Women's Wing
- (iii) Wage Employment Wing
- (iv) Watershed Wing

- (v) Engineering Wing
- (vi) Accounts Wing
- (vii) Monitoring and Evaluation Wing, and
- (viii) General Administration Wing.

The DRDA should not have any permanent staff and should not resort to direct recruitment. The employees should be taken on deputation for specific periods to ensure better choice of staff and flexibility in staffing pattern.

The posts of project directors, project officers, assistant project officers and all technical posts should be manned by officers with proven capability and motivation selected in an objective manner by selection committees.