



IAS — the most powerful career in Indian public service, and the 35 years inside it



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Clear the hardest exam in India, and within a few years run a district as Collector. Real power early on — and a life of transfers, pressure and public scrutiny for 35 years.

Published 6 June 2026 · Last reviewed 6 June 2026

THE 35-YEAR JOURNEY

You begin with training and a sub-division, then run a whole district as Collector, then move to the state secretariat. Around year 24 the path splits. Most officers retire as Principal or Additional Chief Secretary, running a major state department. A smaller number reach the apex: Chief Secretary, Secretary to the Government of India, or Cabinet Secretary.

SALARY PROJECTION

If you joined today

Figures as of June 2026

7th CPC pay matrix (IAS scale), DA ~55%, no promotion delays. Pay is the central-government IAS scale and rises steadily with each grade. Both paths are the same until about year 24, then split between officers who reach the apex — Chief Secretary, Secretary to the Government of India, Cabinet Secretary (fast-track) — and the majority who retire as Principal or Additional Chief Secretary (steady), already very senior. The 8th CPC (expected 2026-27) will revise basics. We update this every year.

YEAR	MILESTONE	SENIOR STATE CAREER most officers	TO THE APEX the few
0	Joining (SDM)	L10 · ₹95k Both paths identical so far · SDM / Assistant Collector	
8	Collector	L13 · ₹1.75L Both paths identical so far · District Magistrate / Collector	
16	Secretary (state)	L14 · ₹2.1L Both paths identical so far · Secretary / Commissioner	
26	Paths split	L15 · ₹2.6L Principal Secretary (state)	L17 · ₹3.1L Chief Secretary / Secretary, GoI
34	Retirement range	L16 · ₹2.9L Additional Chief Secretary	L18 · ₹3.5L Cabinet Secretary (rare)

In-hand figures. The apex grades are fixed pay; in-hand varies with posting. Paths split around year 24. Snapshot dated June 2026.

Sarkari Job Guide does not claim this salary structure. The figures come from the verified sources listed on the career page.

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ABOUT

About Sarkari Job Guide

Visual career maps for government jobs in India. Each map shows the full 30-year path: pay at every stage, promotion timelines, and the costs nobody mentions.

Salaries and rules change. Read the latest version:

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