

Background, Rationale and Methodology of the Self Inspection Format of the O/o Deputy Commissioner and O/o Sub-Divisional Officer

Background:

The institution / office of the Deputy Commissioner represent the Government at district level and is the most credible institution in the field. Historically it has been playing a very pivotal role in maintaining the law and order, revenue and general administration- capable of and expected of doing anything and everything. He is seen as a change agent and as a one who would provide overall leadership in the district in the task of nation building through coordination and facilitation. Since independence the Deputy Commissioners have also been made responsible for a diverse portfolio of functions especially the developmental administration and coordination of various development and regulatory departments. The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution accompanied with economic liberalisation and the expansion of programmes / projects /missions under right to information and technological regime redefined the functions and image of the institution of Deputy Commissioner in all directions. Thus the health / internal efficiency of the institution of Deputy Commissioner is one of the best key performance indicator to assess the governance in the state / country.

The widespread functions, dynamics of democratic structures and functioning, emergence of civil society and media, phenomenal growth in demand for public services under no matching increase in civil services seriously constrained the available time for any Deputy Commissioner in exercising and consolidating core functions viz., internal security, Land & Revenue; and Regulatory Administration, Food security, Disaster Management, elections, treasury etc. Parallely there has been a serious erosion of a system (Divisional Commissioner or other system) to guide and supervise the institution of the Deputy Commissioner on constant basis. The result is neglect of due procedure / process re-engineering of government business over time affecting the law and order and service delivery. The implications are visible and glaring as the institution has increasingly becoming a subject of criticism from all quarters (legislature, Judiciary, Media, Civil Society etc) having implication on its morale and integrity and finally on outcomes expected from civil services. All this strongly suggests the need to consolidate and strengthen the institution of Deputy Commissioner commensurate with its functions and mandate so as to ensure good governance and thereby translate the nation's vision and policies into a reality. The Government especially the Divisional Commissioners / Sr.officials in the Government can play a very positive role in the exercise of strengthening the institution of Deputy Commissioner.

Thus as to strengthen the institution of Deputy Commissioner through guidance and supervision, this office has formulated a system of comprehensive and a systematic inspection of the offices of the Deputy Commissioner. It is needless to say that the inspection of Deputy Commissioners' office is not an easy task with its multitude of - branches and functions / services requiring good understanding of law, procedure and performance parameters. Thus as to make the inspections easy, educative and purposeful, this office has devised an innovative tool of Branch specific Self Inspection Format (s)

for objective appraisal and to provide need based guidance. The tool was developed in a participatory approach involving the SDOs, Deputy Commissioners, HODs and Administrative departments.

Rationale for the Format:

Given the multiple and ever expanding mandate of the Deputy Commissioners' institution, effective inspection will not be possible unless there is a proper checklist / format capturing the Key Performance Indicators of various functions / services delivered by different branches of the Deputy Commissioner / SDO office.

The salient features of the Self Inspection Format are as follows:

1. The basic objective of the format is to enable the DC and SDO (Civil) Establishments in their endeavor to deliver Good Governance by consolidating the office processes, transparency and accountability for improved performance in service delivery and regulation. Also to enable the Government to know the difficulties being faced by the District / Sub-Divisional Establishments for needful action. *In addition the formats will facilitate a comprehensive inspection of DC & SDO (Civil) establishments by the Divisional Commissioner/ Sr.officials of the Government.*
2. The Self Inspection Format has been prepared based on the inputs and the feedback of Deputy Commissioners of 5 districts of Hills and Barak Valley Division viz., Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong, Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi Valuable inputs and feedback were also received from the Sub-Divisional Officers (Civil) and Deputy Commissioners of other Districts. Most of the branch specific formats were finalized in consultation with the respective departmental officers.
3. The 2013 Self Inspection Format has been prepared based on the experience gained upon testing the 2012 format for its suitability, applicability and effectiveness. The format was also used for the inspection of Sub-Divisional Offices.
4. It is expected that the format will get further standardized, stabilized and evolves on usage over time and serves to achieve the desired results.
5. The Vision, Objectives, Outcomes expected and how to use are clearly mentioned in the format

Objectives of the Commissioner's Inspection of DC/ SDO © Establishments:

1. To know and assess the present status of -office procedure being followed, service delivery and regulation in compliance to the **rule of law** in various branches of the DC / SDO © establishment.
2. To appreciate the best practices / good work done by the Deputy Commissioners and SDOs and their team.
3. To encourage Deputy Commissioners and SDOs and Branch Officers to take up need based improvements using Government Business Process Re-Engineering and e-Governance.
4. To enable the Deputy Commissioner / SDO (Civil) as a checklist / ready reckoner to enforce accountability of manpower and improve service delivery and better regulation.
5. To enable the Government to know the difficulties being faced by the District / Sub-Divisional Establishments to show results as per the mandate and to pursue the pending policy matters at State Government level.

Not a fault finding exercise: It is emphasized to all the officers that the inspection is an annual exercise to consolidate team building with the Deputy Commissioners and Sub-Divisional Officers as a performance management tool and is not a fault finding exercise.

Methodology to be adopted for the Inspection of Deputy Commissioners office:

The format has to be circulated to all the Deputy Commissioners in advance with an instruction to circulate the same to the Branch officers as to undertake self inspection of respective branches and fill up the format and submit to the Deputy Commissioner. In turn the Deputy Commissioners are requested to inspect the branches and submit the reports to the Divisional Commissioner with their comments. Upon receipt of the said Self Inspection Reports, the Divisional Commissioner will undertake the inspection of DC offices with the aid of the Self Inspection Reports and submit observations to the DCs and to the Government for needful follow up action. Further the format will be revised for the following year based on the feedback of the DCs and the Government duly considering changed statute and government policies.

Experience in Assam:

- The O/o Commissioner, Hills & Barak Valley: Assam circulated the format 2012 to all Deputy Commissioners in September 2012 and received the filled in reports from the Districts. There upon the Commissioner along with a team of officials both in-house and from neighboring districts had undertaken the inspection. The inspection reports are circulated to the DCs and to the Government for needful action.
- Further the 2012-13 inspection helped to test and revise the 2012 format for the next financial year 2013-14 inspection.

Proposed Inspection Schedule for 2013-14:

April	The Office of Divisional Commissioner will circulate the format to all the DCs/SDOs for needful action.
	The Deputy Commissioners /SDOs will circulate the branch specific formats to respective branch officers with in April.
August	The branch officers to undertake inspections of their respective branches in the prescribed format as on 1st August and submit the reports to the DC by 16 th Aug.
September	The DCs will take 4 more weeks for inspection and verification and comments;
October	The DC will submit the self inspection report in the prescribed format to the O/o Divisional Commissioner by 31 st October both in soft and hard copies. The SDOs © will submit their report through their respective Deputy Commissioners.
November-December	The Divisional Commissioner will undertake inspection of the offices of Deputy Commissioner and Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil) as per inspection schedule informed to the DC /SDO (Civil) in advance.
January	The Divisional Commissioner will provide his/her observations based on their reports (I & II) and inspection to the DCs/SDO © and Government Departments for their comments / clarifications/ follow up action and will hold a meeting.
February	The DCs / SDOs will submit action taken report to the Div. Commissioner.
March	Revision / improvement of the format if any based on experience.