

VIDESH SEWA



Sushma Swaraj Institute
of Foreign Service

विदेश सेवा, भारत सरकार
Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India



Contents

Editor's Desk

Highlights

Training for IFS OTs and Bhutanese Diplomats	01-04
Valedictory Ceremony for IFS Officer Trainees of 2020 Batch	05-06
Training Experience by IFS OTs 2020 Batch	07-09
Training Programmes for Foreign Diplomats	10
Workshops/Training Programmes for MEA Officials	10

Visitors to SSIFS	11-12
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New Postings	12
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Editor's Desk



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Dean
Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service
Ministry of External Affairs

The highlight of Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) training during the quarter April-June 2021 was the successful conclusion of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) Officer Trainees (OTs) 2020 and Bhutanese Diplomats Induction Training Programme (ITP) and its valedictory function with the participation of Hon'ble External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar as Chief Guest and Hon'ble Minister of State Shri V. Muraleedharan, as Guest of Honour. EAM's valuable advice for IFS OTs summarised in ten guidelines constitute 'mantras' for young Indian diplomats and beyond.

During this quarter, Phase-II of ITP focused on diplomacy modules covering economic-commercial, science & technology, health, consular-passport-visa, media, protocol & hospitality, diplomatic communication, negotiations, presentations, mentoring, etc.

The period coincided with the second wave of pandemic during which SSIFS leveraged technology extensively for blended learning or hybrid training methodology to overcome physical constraints.

Foreign training programmes organised online were:

- (i) Special Training Programme for 51 Vietnamese diplomats;
- (ii) Special Training Module for 70 participants from Dominican Republic on 'Reformed Multilateralism'; and
- (iii) Special Training Programme for 35 Sierra Leone diplomats.

The SSIFS initiative of an e-newsletter *Videsh Sewa* since 2019 has now completed ten editions. We hope it has brought a glimpse of SSIFS activities to our readers. We wish one and all continued happy reading!

New Delhi
July 2021


[J.S. Mukul]

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Highlights

Training for IFS Officers

Training for IFS Officer Trainees of 2020 Batch and Diplomats from Bhutan

During the quarter ending June 2021, 24 IFS Officer Trainees (OTs) underwent their Army Attachment from 22-26 March 2021. The second part of their outstation attachment was Bharat Darshan (tour of different parts of India) which took place during the period 28 March-05 April 2021 and they were accompanied by their two Bhutanese colleagues. This was followed by the State Attachment to their respective allotted States (Assam, Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telengana & Uttar Pradesh) from 07-09 April 2021. The two Bhutanese diplomats underwent their State Attachment in Assam.

On their return to New Delhi, Phase-II of the Induction Training Programme (ITP) for the IFS OTs and Bhutanese diplomats commenced on 12 April 2021. Owing to the surge in COVID-19 cases, the training went online. Despite the substantial challenges posed by the second wave and the subsequent lockdown, SSIFS was able to maintain the rigour, integrity and continuity of the ITP without any disruption. The modules during this phase included Economic and Commercial Diplomacy, Science & Technology, Health Diplomacy, Consular, Passport & Visa matters, Official Language Policy, Protocol, Reporting and Diplomatic Communication Skills, Cultural Diplomacy, Media Management and Public Diplomacy, Tourism, Hospitality, Diaspora, RTI, Personality Development etc. As the COVID-19 situation normalized gradually, the hybrid mode of training (both online and offline) was adopted. The OTs and Bhutanese diplomats made presentations on their outstation attachments (Army and State Attachments) and defended their thesis (on regions/issues mostly connected with their Compulsory Foreign Language). Resident Head of Missions of the Delegation of the European Union, Morocco, Mexico, Vietnam, WHO Representative to India and Chargé d'Affaires of Afghanistan addressed the OTs and the Bhutanese diplomats during this period. Like last year, SSIFS conducted an objective and transparent evaluation for the IFS OTs at the end of their six-month Induction Training Programme.

While the ITP helped hone the academic and professional skills necessary for a career in diplomacy, SSIFS also encouraged the OTs to nurture their creative side during the six-month training. The various Committees of the OTs organised several events and activities during Phase 2 of the ITP. To capture the most scintillating visuals and fascinating moments from their 'Bharat Darshan', the Photography & Cinema Committee organised a photo and video contest in April 2021. To inspire their colleagues to remain fit and healthy even during the tough days of the lockdown during the second wave, the Sports Committee organised the 'Quarantine Challenge' in April 2021 to encourage everyone to achieve their daily fitness goals. Also in April 2021, the Sports Committee organised badminton tournaments and table tennis tournaments.

In May 2021, the Literary and House Journal Committee organised the 'Pack a Punch' Competition through which the OTs expressed their creativity by penning poems, limericks and tiny tales. In June 2021, they published 'Saudade', the first-ever House Journal compiled, edited and published by the 2020 Batch of IFS OTs. It brought together articles, poems, short stories, photos and artwork contributed by the OTs.

Army Attachment



IFS OTs' visit to Bagdogra, Dibrugarh and Srinagar as part of their Army attachment

Bharat Darshan



IFS OTs' visit to Andamans, Sikkim, Kolkata, Puducherry & Hyderabad as part of their Bharat Darshan tour

State Attachment



IFS OTs calling on Indian dignitaries (Governors, Chief Ministers and senior officials) and visits to the projects/facilities of Indian States as part of their State Attachment



Smt. Shovana Narayan, Indian Kathak Dancer, Smt. Veena Sikri, former Ambassador and Shri Sanjoy Roy, Managing Director of Teamwork Arts addressed the IFS OTs during ICCR's Cultural Diplomacy Module from 3-4 May 2021



A session on CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) conducted by Dr. Sunil Pal from Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) for IFS OTs on 15 April 2021



Presentation of thesis by IFS OTs

IFS OTs handing over insignias to Dean (SSIFS) which were received during their Army Attachment

IFS OTs' interaction with Resident Heads of Mission, Senior Foreign Diplomats



IFS OTs' virtual interaction with H.E. Mr. Feberico Salas Lofté, Ambassador of Mexico to India on 10 May 2021



SSIFS Faculty, IFS OTs 2020 Batch & Bhutanese Diplomats

Valedictory Ceremony for IFS Officer Trainees of 2020 Batch

A valedictory ceremony was organized on 08 June 2021, which was presided over by Dr. S. Jaishankar, Hon'ble External Affairs Minister (EAM) as Chief Guest. Shri V. Muraleedharan, Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs (MoS) participated as Guest of Honour. Awards were given on the occasion to deserving OTs of the 2020 batch.



EAM addressing the IFS OTs



EAM's Gold Medal for the Best Officer Trainee & Ambassador Bimal Sanyal Memorial Prize to the Best Officer Trainee: Ms. Aishwarya Sheoran



Minister of State for External Affairs' Silver Medal for Esprit de Corps: Shri Himanshu Gupta



Minister of State for External Affairs' Silver Medal for Esprit de Corps: Shri Nithin K.



Ambassador Bimal Sanyal Memorial Medal for Best Dissertation: Ms. Devi Nandana A.V.



Trophy for Best Sportswoman: Ms. Prithika Rani M.



Trophy for Best Sportsman: Mr. Sonam Palden



Trophy for Best Committee: Cultural Committee (Ms. Aasma Garg, Ms. Aishwarya Sheoran, Ms. Ankita Wakekar, Shri Himanshu Gupta, Shri Himanshu N. Singh & Shri Nithin K.)



Trophy for Bhutanese diplomats: Ms. Kezang Dema and Mr. Sonam Palden

Training Experience by IFS OTs 2020 Batch



Aishwarya Sheoran

This has been one of the most enriching journeys undertaken by the officers of the 2020 batch of IFS and our two friends from the Bhutanese Foreign Service. When we came here following our Foundation Course in LBSNAA, the field of diplomacy was absolutely new to us but the six months' training at SSIFS gave us an insight into the intricacies of diplomacy and at the same time made us realize how limited our current knowledge is and how much more we need to learn as we progress in the Service. The entire course is brilliantly structured, meticulously planned and highly relevant to the dynamic times, wherein through a mix of lectures, simulations, role-plays and case-studies, we were introduced to the world of diplomacy. There was a balance between theoretical lectures and hands-on practical sessions which brought greater clarity while giving us a glimpse of the manner in which negotiations are held in various fora. Phase 1 of our training at SSIFS formally began on 4 January 2021 for a duration of eleven weeks. In this phase, we were exposed to academic inputs and insights on a wide range of topics covering different dimensions of geopolitics and strategy with special emphasis on two key principles of the Indian Foreign Policy: (i) strategic autonomy and (ii) continuity with change. The lectures also covered different regions starting with Neighbourhood, Indian Ocean Region, Central Asia, ASEAN, India-Europe relations, Indo-Pacific and the dynamics of the emerging multilateral and multipolar world amongst others. We were also introduced to the new emerging theatres of science diplomacy, climate change, Arctic-Antarctic conundrums to familiarize us with the fast-changing world order and domains. Alongside the classroom sessions, there was equal emphasis on co-curricular activities. Apart from dance, Zumba, tennis and gym instructors, we had six committees to not only organize events, but also to cement our friendships. During our Phase I, we visited the National Defence College and the International Solar Alliance to get a first-hand experience of their functioning. Finally, we also had a full-fledged cyber-security module and a two-day innovative workshop on rapid reading to hone our skills further in these areas. "More you sweat in peace, less you bleed in war" goes the military saying. Since diplomats are also soldiers without uniform, as a young diplomat, the more we train and learn here, the less likely we are to make mistakes while representing India abroad. The training at SSIFS has truly made us more confident as we step into the world of diplomacy!

Training Experience by IFS OTs 2020 Batch



Himanshu Gupta

I recall that during the very first week of our Induction Training at SSIFS, Hon'ble External Affairs Minister pointed it out to us that the post-COVID world which we were going to navigate, would not be the same. I believe that our training at SSIFS would surely help us to be better prepared for this changing world. It was full of diverse lectures from experts, various attachments, simulation exercises and co-curricular activities. We were fortunate to be able to carry out various attachments between Phase-I and Phase-II despite the COVID-19 pandemic. These attachments helped us in grasping more clearly the role we play in furthering our national interest. In March 2021, we got the opportunity for a week-long Army attachment in different groups to the Northern and Eastern Commands. We briefly experienced the ground realities in which the Army operates and also understood the importance of collaboration between the armed forces and the diplomatic corps, in pursuance of our national goals. Our memorable experience with the Indian Army, was immediately followed by a ten-day long Bharat Darshan, during which we tried to understand the diversity of our kaleidoscopic cultural heritage, rituals, and locales in India. We also understood the importance of esprit de corps during the tribulations we faced while travelling through several States of the country with safety and precautions, despite the pandemic. We then went on a three-day State attachment, wherein each of us went to the State which we will represent throughout our diplomatic career. We understood the significance of States' role in our foreign policy and also how we, as diplomats, could help in furthering the State's developmental interests by fulfilling our duties. As we begin our Desk attachment and prepare to leave for our language training abroad, I believe that wherever we go, our time here at SSIFS will always be remembered and cherished. I wish everyone in our 2020 IFS Batch and our two Bhutanese diplomat-friends the very best in the service to their nations!

Training Experience by IFS OTs 2020 Batch



Nithin K.

Our batch was unique for the simple reason that it was the batch which had to face the wrath of COVID-19 even in 2021. Instead of going down in history as the COVID special batch, we would go down in history as the batch which withstood COVID! Even though, we had an outbreak in our campus, it is with great pride that I write that we, as a team, were able to arrest the spread of the virus in a very effective manner. We had maintained physical distance and with timely testing, we regained order in a short span of two weeks. We were with each other by remaining connected digitally, which brought us together as a Batch as well. Our Ministry and the Covid Cell were swift to respond to the situation and all of us, who had not contracted the virus, stand vaccinated as of today. But like every other dark cloud, the COVID crisis too had a silver lining. Most of us picked up reading very seriously. The creative minds of our batch explored the potential of making videos with moments captured during our Bharat Darshan. We also tried our hands at poetry writing. The “Count Your Steps” competition which mandated us to hit the target of 7000 steps every day, was an interesting physical engagement during the lockdown. Even during these tough times, our academic rigour was never compromised. Our attachments with ICCR, with every limitation of an online engagement, was one of the most memorable ones, with music, dance and every other aspect that makes India colourful. The module with XP Division was particularly interesting. We were also pleasantly surprised to see the announcement regarding DD International Channel the very next week. This used to be a recurring theme of the Batch during our “Chai pe Charcha”. The module with the Protocol Division was overwhelmingly interesting. I strongly believe that these insights would help us adhere to standards expected of an officer of this prestigious service. The sessions on Tourism Promotion, Economic Diplomacy and the Consular Services of the Ministry were particularly captivating as it reminded us of the great expectations that the Government and the country demands from us. We had planned an Inter Service India Quiz under the aegis of our Institute to bring together Officer Trainees from other Services in and around Delhi as a part of “Breaking Silos” initiative. Even though it did not materialize, we leave it as a thought for our successors. On the whole, the training at SSIFS was nothing less than an intellectual extravaganza, celebration of friendship, a saga of pushing limits and indeed an intense preparatory phase before we fly out with the Tricolour!

Training Programmes for Foreign Diplomats

2nd Special Course for Diplomats from Vietnam

The 2nd Special Course for Diplomats from Vietnam was held virtually from the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) on 11-12 May 2021. Fifty-one diplomats from Vietnam participated in the programme.

The programme was jointly inaugurated on 11 May 2021 by Amb. J.S. Mukul, Dean (SSIFS) and Vice President of the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV), Amb. Dr. Hoang Anh Tuan. During the two-day programme, senior officers from MEA and retired Ambassadors addressed the diplomats on some core aspects of Indian foreign policy and its relations with Vietnam and ASEAN.



Special Training Module for Diplomats from Dominican Republic

A Special Training Module on 'Reformed Multilateralism' for Diplomats from the Dominican Republic (DR) was held virtually from the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) on 16 June 2021. Seventy diplomats/participants from the Dominican Republic took part in the module. The programme was jointly inaugurated on 16 June 2021 by Amb. J.S. Mukul, Dean (SSIFS) and Dr. José Espailat, Dean, Institute of Higher Education in Diplomatic & Consular Training (INESDYC). During the one-day programme, retired Ambassadors addressed the participants on 'Reformed Multilateralism' with regard to the UN and WTO. There were special interventions in the sessions by the DR Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva and the DR Deputy Permanent Representative in New York.



Workshop/Training for MEA Officials

- The 79th Integrated Mission Accounting System (IMAS) Training Programme's Retest was conducted for 12 MEA officials at SSIFS on 01 April 2021.

Visitors to SSIFS



H.E. Mr. Farid Mamundzay, Ambassador of Afghanistan to India, called on Amb J.S. Mukul, Dean (SSIFS) to discuss issues of mutual cooperation and training related matters on 06 April 2021.



Amb J.S. Mukul, Dean (SSIFS) received and interacted with the visiting delegation of Israeli Officers/Diplomats on 07 April 2021.



H.E. Mr. Guillermo Rubio Funes, Ambassador of El Salvador to India called on Amb J.S. Mukul, Dean (SSIFS) to discuss issues of mutual cooperation and training related matters on 08 April 2021.



H.E. Mr. Jason Hall, High Commissioner of Jamaica to India called on Amb J.S. Mukul, Dean (SSIFS) to discuss issues of mutual cooperation and training related matters on 9 April 2021.



New Postings

SSIFS bid farewell to:

Sl. No.	Name	Designation
1.	Shri Prateek Kapil	Consultant
2.	Ms. Lhilhing Sitlhou	SO
3.	Ms. Kajal Gupta	ASO
4.	Ms. Anamika	ASO (OS)
5.	Shri Ravinder	MTS

SSIFS welcomes:

Sl. No.	Name	Designation
1.	Dr. Anuradha Saibaba	Faculty
2.	Ms. Ritu Meena	ASO
3.	Shri Prashant Kumar	MTS
4.	Shri Rajesh Kumar	MTS (OS)

Glimpses of extra-curricular activities of the IFS OTs and Bhutanese Diplomats

Sports activities



IFS OTs' sports activities at SSIFS Campus



About Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service

The Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) was established in 1986 by the Government of India primarily to cater to the professional training needs of the Indian Foreign Service and the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi. SSIFS has diversified its activities to include Courses for foreign diplomats in its efforts to build bridges of friendship and cooperation with countries around the world and Courses of interest to staff and officers at all levels of the Ministry of External Affairs as well as other Civil Services. The Institute is located at Baba Gangnath Marg, Old JNU Campus, New Delhi.

SSIFS is headed by the Dean, a senior Foreign Service officer of the rank of Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs. The current Dean is Amb. J.S. Mukul. SSIFS, primarily has an extensive guest faculty drawn from experts in the field of academics and research, media, public life, industry and trade, senior serving and retired diplomats and other government officials.

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