

VIDESH SEWA



Sushma Swaraj Institute
of Foreign Service
विदेश सेवा संस्थान, भारत सरकार
Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India



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Editor's Desk



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Dean
Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service
Ministry of External Affairs

The Covid-19 pandemic 'unlocks' of restrictions found appropriate reflection in the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) as well. From a training methodology comprising purely online mode during the previous quarter, SSIFS moved to 'blended learning' or 'hybrid model' during the quarter July-September 2020. Accordingly, the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) Officer Trainees (OTs) – 2019 Induction Training Programme (ITP) concluded with an optimum mix of online and physical class room sessions. During ITP, the SSIFS assessment having 20% weightage in determining the *inter se* seniority of IFS 2019 batch was a first in the history of SSIFS/MEA.

The highlight of the quarter was undoubtedly the IFS OTs 2019 valedictory function with the External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, as chief guest. Minister of State V. Muraleedharan and Foreign Secretary Harsh V Shringla participated as guests of honour. In keeping with the times, the elegant and dignified function, albeit at lower key, resonated with the vibrancy of the young diplomats.

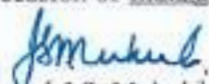
The first special training programme for twenty Surinamese diplomats was the very first one in the online mode for foreign diplomats customised to focus exclusively on protocol issues as per requirement of Suriname. This was in line with SSIFS outreach programmes in the South-South Cooperation framework being demand-driven and thus response-oriented.

Promotion/posting-related training courses for MEA personnel continued online as part of the 'new normal'.

Two new MoUs were concluded by SSIFS with counterpart training institutions in Vietnam and Angola taking the total of SSIFS cooperation MoUs to 89.

In another first, the SSIFS faculty commenced research work on diplomatic training, preparatory to India hosting the annual International Forum on Diplomatic Training (IFDT) conclave in 2022 on the occasion of India@75.

New Delhi
October 2020


[J.S. Mukul]

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Highlights

Training for IFS Officers

Training for IFS Officer Trainees of 2019 Batch and Diplomats from Bhutan

Thirty Indian Foreign Service Officer Trainees (IFS OTs) of the 2019 batch and two Bhutanese diplomats, who began their training at Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) on 9 December 2019, completed their training on 24 July 2020. The training programme of the OTs at SSIFS included modules on theories of international relations, foreign policy, bilateral relations with neighbouring countries and big powers, and multilateral organizations. It also included modules on finance, accounts, administration, establishment, consular work, passport and visa, international law, protocol, economic & commercial diplomacy, defence diplomacy, cyber security, domestic policy, tourism, hospitality and media management. Soft power and communication skills were also stressed upon. For effective dissemination of knowledge to trainees, experienced civil servants, retired ambassadors, senior faculty and research fellows from various ministries, institutions and think tanks were invited as resource persons. Additionally, SSIFS also invited Ambassadors/High Commissioners of foreign countries (including P5) to interact with the Indian Foreign Service Officer Trainees.

Various innovative pedagogy was adopted to train the Indian Foreign Service Officers Trainees and latest Information Technology (IT) tools were used in conducting the training programme (both offline and online). The pedagogical tools included interactive lectures, simulations, role play, workshops, hands-on training, case studies, success stories, structured mentoring programmes, interactions between foreign and Indian diplomats, field visits and exposure through various attachments. During the COVID-19 lockdowns, SSIFS went digital in a big way through online courses/sessions. In the COVID-19 unlock phases, SSIFS pursued the methodology of blended learning through hybrid programmes / sessions both off-line and on-line.

Starting with the IFS 2019 batch, SSIFS has introduced an objective and transparent assessment system for Indian Foreign Service Officer Trainees. This year also witnessed the introduction of online courses in 'Cyber Security' (conducted by the Gujarat Forensic Sciences University) and 'Rapid Reading' (conducted by Iris, Chicago) for the Officer Trainees.



► H.E. Mr. Shin Bongil, Ambassador of Korea to India interacted on webinar with the IFS OTs



▼ H.E. Mr. Kenneth I. Juster, Ambassador of US to India interacted on webinar with the IFS OTs



Shri Nagesh Singh, JS (Chief of Protocol), MEA interacted with the IFS OTs



IFS OTs handover insignias to Dean (SSIFS) which were received by the respective groups during their Army Attachments



'Workshop on Hospitality' for the IFS OTs conducted at Hotel Taj Palace, New Delhi

Valedictory Ceremony for IFS Officer Trainees of 2019 Batch

A valedictory ceremony was organized on 24 July 2020, 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) and Shri Harsh V. Shringla, Foreign Secretary participated as Guests of Honour. Awards were given on the occasion to deserving OTs of the 2019 batch.



EAM addressing the IFS OTs



Ms. Pujya Priyadarshni, IFS Topper of 2019 Batch



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



Minister of State for External Affairs' Silver Medal for the Best Officer Trainee: Shri Dhananjay Singh Yadav



Ambassador Bimal Sanyal Memorial Medal for Best Dissertation: Ms. Rangashree T.K.



Trophy for Best Committee: Cinema Committee (Shri Chittireddy Sripal, Shri Vikram Grewal, Ms. Kanishka Singh, Ms. Anchita Kethwas and Shri Muhammed Abdul Jaleel)



Trophy for Bhutanese diplomats: Ms. Namgay Choden and Mr. Phurpa Tshering



Dhananjay Singh Yadav
IFS (OT) 2019 Batch

Training Experience by IFS OTs 2019 Batch

Our batch underwent training during a remarkable point in time. We will be navigating a slightly different world than the one when we entered SSIFS and our training here has surely helped us become better prepared for this changing world. I would like to thank the entire Administration of SSIFS and Dean Sir for being always approachable and accommodating during these uncertain times.

The classroom lectures and the field attachments have helped us in understanding the role we play in furthering our national interests. We had our first exposure of this in our attachment with the Indian Ocean Dialogue and Delhi Dialogue, followed by the remarkable Raisina Dialogue, all within six weeks of joining SSIFS.

In February 2020, we went abroad, a delightful first for many, for our Mission attachment. These countries were chosen keeping in mind the increasing salience in recent years of the concept of Indo-Pacific. There, we got our first experience of learning how Indian Missions and Posts function and the role they play in pursuit of our national interests. In March, we also got to spend a memorable week with the Indian Army in their Northern and Eastern Command.

We were in the middle of our Bharat Darshan in mid-March when the COVID-19 pandemic was declared and overnight our batch became the first point of contact for thousands of Indians in distress. Many of my colleagues have done an incredible job during this COVID attachment, spending sleepless nights attending to calls and messages. It was a steep learning curve for all of us and the experience has taught us that there is always room for more empathy beyond the call of duty.

Wherever we go, our time here at SSIFS will always be remembered and cherished. And until we meet again, I hope you find that while the days were long, the years were short.



Smriti Mishra
IFS (OT) 2019 Batch

Training Experience by IFS OTs 2019 Batch

*“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may
remember, involve me and I learn.”*

Benjamin Franklin

It is this spirit that guided our training at the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service, where from the very start, we were treated as Officers, expected to conduct ourselves as such and take ownership of our own learning.

Post completion of the Foundation Course at Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), as we moved from the calmness of Mussoorie to the liveliness of Delhi, we eagerly awaited the next chapter in our learning, the Induction Training Course at what was then called the Foreign Service Institute. Little did we know then that our training experience would be such a unique and distinct one, made so by the unprecedented circumstances we found ourselves responding to.

The 2019 Batch of the Indian Foreign Service, along with our friends from the Bhutan Foreign Service, had the rare privilege of witnessing many firsts- the first batch to be trained at the Institute post its rechristening as the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service, the first batch to be deployed for actively managing a pandemic and the first batch to undergo training in a virtual format.

After getting a bird's eye view of India's foreign policy and the functioning of the MEA, we moved into phase 1 which focussed on understanding global politics and India's relations with the world. The pedagogy was a rich mix of lectures, case studies, engaging classroom discussions, and often heated simulations. For phase 2, our classroom became a virtual one, where we learnt the many aspects of Economic & Commercial diplomacy, Science & Technology diplomacy, International Law, Diplomatic Communication, to name a few.

Throughout our course, the Institute ensured that we got an opportunity to hone our reporting and writing skills. The submissions we worked on included a thesis, a book review, mock Monthly Record of Events (MRE) for the countries of our language posting, and on the Hon'ble EAM's advice, we also wrote a MRE for India, allowing us to view the happenings in our country from a different perspective.

As we look back at the eight months spent at the Institute, the guidance and mentorship provided by the Dean, Shri J.S. Mukul, have been invaluable. Our experience was enriched by his hands-on approach to the training and open door policy, offering us a daily lesson on how to conduct ourselves as diplomats and as officers of the Government of India. The constant guidance and support of our Course Coordinators and Faculty Members, who had to constantly reorient the training to the changed circumstances, allowed us to have a holistic learning experience.

Our days at SSIFS have enabled us to piece together the puzzle and understand how, as Indian diplomats, we take India to the world and bring the world to India. We look forward to the next aspect of our learning, in our respective Missions, where we will understand better which piece of the puzzle we are, and where we fit in in India's growth story. It will be an honour for us to serve as foot soldiers of this great nation, as enthusiastic ambassadors of Brand India and as proud flag bearers of the India Way.



**Ms. Rangashree T.K.
IFS (OT) 2019 Batch**

Training Experience by IFS OTs 2019 Batch

I still remember vividly my first day at SSIFS (then FSI). After a long drive from LBSNAA, Mussoorie, I was finally at the long-cherished campus for my diplomatic training. About 8 months hence, the feeling is the same. As I sit in my new home in Taiwan, I write about my training in Delhi with some nostalgia.

Not only was it classroom training where we learned larger overviews and smaller nitty-gritties of Indian foreign policy, but also learned through real-life (albeit mock) negotiations and simulations that took one through the entire gamut of formulating one's thoughts, preparing extensively and to ultimately execute the plan of action when the time comes. As a young diplomat, it made me understand and comprehend the nuances of various important topics like the neighbourhood, climate change etc. In addition to this, various assignments such as Reports of Duty, mock Monthly Record of Events, the thesis and book review inculcated in us the habit of writing formal/academic pieces, a skill indispensable to our profession.

From my perspective, the ecosystem offered on campus (apart from its most convenient location in South Delhi) nurtured me extensively. In many ways, especially given the COVID-19 imposed lockdown, it became a second home to many of us. Soon shared breakfasts, lunches and dinners and post-dinner walks with the whole batch became our 'new normal', something we will cherish as precious takeaways for the rest of our lives as we serve in new and distant lands!

In particular, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the faculty and staff, and Dean Ambassador J.S. Mukul for always being there for us and for guiding us each step of the way.

As they say, distance makes the heart grow fonder, and we will always continue to reminisce and relive our days at SSIFS with utmost fondness.

Thank you, SSIFS!

Training for Foreign Diplomats

The 1st Special Course for Diplomats from Suriname (online) focused on protocol matters was organised by SSIFS from 14-25 September 2020. 20 young diplomats from Suriname participated in the course. H.E. Amb. Albert R. Ramdin, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Business & International Cooperation of Suriname graced the occasion virtually and delivered both the Inaugural Address and Valedictory Address.



Workshop/Training for MEA Officials

- ▶ A Promotion-related Training Programme for ASOs and PAs was conducted on webinar for 92 MEA officials at SSIFS from 31 August – 4 September 2020.
- ▶ An English Stenography Test for 19 newly recruited Personal Assistants and Stenographers was organised at SSIFS on 9 September 2020.
- ▶ A training programme on Immigration, Visa and Foreigners' Registration & Tracking (IVFRT) was organised for 47 MEA officials at SSIFS from 14-23 September 2020.
- ▶ A Typing Test for 04 Direct Recruit Assistant Section Officers was organised at SSIFS on 25 September 2020.
- ▶ A Promotion-related Training Programme for SSAs, JSAs and Stenographers is being conducted on webinar for 62 MEA officials at SSIFS from 28 September – 5 October 2020.

Speaker addressing on webinar to participants of the Promotion-related Training Programme



English Stenography Test for PAs & Stenos in progress



Typing Test for ASOs in progress

Visitor to SSIFS



H.E. Mr. Muhammad Imran, High Commissioner of Bangladesh to India visited SSIFS to discuss bilateral issues of cooperation and training related matters.

Dean (SSIFS)'s Meetings

A virtual meeting between Amb. Mai Sayavongs, Director General, Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA), Lao PDR and Amb. J.S. Mukul, Dean, SSIFS held on 7 August 2020.

Ambassador J.S. Mukul, Dean, SSIFS and Air Marshal D. Choudhury, Commandant, National Defence College met to discuss areas and possibilities of mutual engagement and cooperation between their institutions on 17 August 2020.



SSIFS Outreach

As a part of its outreach programme, SSIFS has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with its following counterparts during this quarter taking the total number of SSIFS's cooperation MoUs to 89:

Sl No.	Name of Institution	Country	Date
1.	Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam	Vietnam	25 August 2020
2.	Venancio da Silva Moura Institute of International Relations	Angola	7 September 2020



MoU with Vietnam signed on the margins of 17th India-Vietnam Joint Commission Meeting



MoU with Angola signed on the margins of 1st India-Angola Joint Commission Meeting

New Postings

SSIFS bid farewell to:

S.No	Name	Designation
1.	Shri Rahul Shrivastava	Joint Secretary
2.	Shri Manpreet Singh	ASO
3.	Shri Daulat Bisht	MTS

SSIFS welcomes:

S.No	Name	Designation
1.	Ms. Nilakshi Saha Sinha	Joint Secretary
2.	Shri Bimal Saigal	Consultant
3.	Ms. Devi Gopinath	Deputy Secretary
4.	Shri Jagdeep S. Juneja	Sr. Pr. Private Secretary
5.	Shri Girish Pujari	Pr. Private Secretary
6.	Ms. Kajal Gupta	ASO
7.	Shri Jagmohan Singh	ASO
8.	Shri Vinod Bairwa	MTS



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, the media, public life, industry and trade, senior serving and retired diplomats and other government officials.

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