Volume 05 - May 2026

VIDESH SEWA

SUSHMA SWARAJ INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN SERVICE

Call on External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar by 16 participants of BRICS Young Diplomats Forum and 07 Heads of the BRICS Diplomatic Academies on 22 May 2026

The Special Course for 35 Diplomats (I of III Groups in 2026) from Nepal was organised at SSIFS during 04-15 May 2026

FROM DEAN'S DESK

Dear Readers, Dear Friends,

The highlight of May month at SSIFS was the organisation of BRICS Young Diplomats Forum (BYDF) on 18-23 May 2026 under the BRICS Chairship of India this year. The program brought together not only 16 diplomats from 8 BRICS countries, it also saw the participation of 7 Heads of the Diplomatic Academies from BRICS countires. It was a unique program of experiential -- learning and experience sharing. The program was designed to cover the four thematic focus areas of India's BRICS Chairship - Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation, and Sustainability.

This gathering of young diplomats from across the BRICS nations was not only a celebration of our shared values but also a demonstration of our collective capacity to innovate, cooperate, and build resilience in the face of global challenges. The Forum was designed to provide experiential learning opportunities to the participants, mentored by experts and practitioners of different aspects of diplomacy. Each day produced coherent ideas based on the discussions and tabletop exercises, which were captured in summaries of four days in the form of Resilience Playbook, Innovation Portfolio, Cooperation Communiqué, and Sustainability Roadmap. A Compendium was also published and shared for future reference for forthcoming BRICS Presidencies.

On 22 May, the Heads of Diplomatic Academies shared their perspectives and experiences on diplomatic training in current challenging times, where resilience and innovation have become the most crucial factors for success. A visit to the Taj Mahal on 23 May was the perfect finale to the BYDF, where most of the first-time visitors to India could appreciate the 375-year-old monument.

The Special Course for I of III groups of diplomats from Nepal was organised at SSIFS from 04-15 May 2026. The program covered in 10 days different aspects of Diplomacy and Foreign Policy, including the behavioural and functional competencies needed for a diplomat in the times of geopolitical uncertainties and technological disruptions. We expect two more similar groups from Nepal in July and September this year. This is a unique capacity-building contribution from India to Nepal under our Neighbourhood First policy.

Orientation program for 13 Defence Attaché Designates was conducted on 04-07 May 2026 at SSIFS, where we covered both substantive as well as functional aspects of working in our missions abroad, with the focus on Viksit Bharat vision.

Next month, SSIFS will host three important programs - one, the Special Program for 40 diplomats for Algeria, Libya, and Syria; two, the Mid-Career Training Program - II, for IFS Officers of the 2010 batch; and three, the phase-II of training program for IFS OTs of 2025 batch. With continuous expansion in our programs, both in quality and quantity, the upbeat SSIFS Family extends best wishes to the readers of this newsletter!

Raj Kumar Srivastava
New Delhi
29 May 2026

Training Program for Foreign Diplomats

Special Course for 35 Diplomats from Nepal
(4-15 May 2026)

The special capacity-building program brought together 35 diplomats from Nepal to engage in 30 sessions imparting Domain, Functional and Behavioural Competencies. Each day of the Training Program was dedicated to a theme, namely Political Diplomacy, Trade, Technology, Global South Institutions, Talent & Tourism, Traditions & Cultural Diplomacy, and Environmental Diplomacy. Taking into account the relevance of practical skills, sessions were curated along the themes: Functional Competencies for Smarter Diplomacy and Behavioural Competencies for Grounded Diplomacy. Diplomats also received the opportunity to visit 5 Centres of Excellence and Cultural Sites in Delhi.

Political Diplomacy

The program opened with India's strategic worldview. Dean (SSIFS) provided an overview on the guiding principles of India's foreign policy and the significance of 5Ts (Talent, Technology, Tourism, Trade & Traditions) in executing foreign policy. Addressing the operational realities of bilateral ties, Shri Munu Mahawar, AS (North), delivered a comprehensive outline of India-Nepal relations, highlighting diplomatic milestones and aligning the visions of India and Nepal. Furthermore, a dedicated session on India's Human-Centric Development Partnership and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) was led by Mr Anish Kumar, Senior Advisor, Development Partnership Administration (DPA), and Cmdt. Pankaj Mishra, Rapid Response Cell (RRC), MEA.

Multilateral Diplomacy & Economic Diplomacy

Amb Asoke Mukerji shared India's experience in multilateral diplomacy in International Organisations. Beyond the governance framework, the training program provided the trainees with a comprehensive understanding of connectivity frameworks in the neighbourhood, as well as an insight into global trade frameworks. Sessions on Trade and Connectivity were curated by two of our knowledge partners Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) and Research and Information Systems for Developing Countries (RIS). Prof Rohit Mehtani, IIFT, examined Nepal's impending Least Developed Countries (LDC) graduation and its position within the WTO framework. Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, RIS provided an hands-on tabletop exercise on economic negotiation in multilateral bodies, allowing participants to simulate real-time strategic alignment and decision making. The macroeconomic outlook was concluded during the second week by Dr. Daniel, who evaluated global development benchmarks through the lens of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and XDGs. Simulation of MUN was a key highlight of the session.

AI, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and Technological Toolkits

Recognizing the transformative role of technology in governance, a significant portion of the course was dedicated to equipping the diplomats with contemporary technological toolkits. Cyber law expert Antara Jha led the module focusing on Artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity protocols, and fundamental cyber hygiene with a brief highlight of AI manipulated and deep fake incidents on a global scale. This was paired with a deep-dive session into India's success story in creating and scaling Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), led by tech expert Dr. Vidushi Chaturvedi. To ensure these insights translated directly into daily diplomatic practice, Cmde A P Golaya, conducted a workshop mapping out a functional digital toolkit for smart and efficient diplomacy, enabling participants to leverage advanced digital communication assets.

Environmental Diplomacy and Disaster Resilience

Addressing shared cross-border challenges, the course highlighted the geopolitics of energy, conservation, and climate vulnerability. The technical briefings covered global disaster risk trends, emerging threats, and methods for critical infrastructure resilience, drawing directly from key institutions conceptualised to advance the priorities of Global South. The institutions represented include India's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) and Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA). These lectures were reinforced by a strategic insight on managing energy security amidst heightened geopolitical volatility by Amb Sunjay Sudhir.

Civilizational Ties and Cultural Diplomacy

The final academic pillar celebrated the deep-seated civilizational, cultural, and human connections that form the foundation of India-Nepal interactions. Specially designed sessions on Education and Training Diplomacy as well as existing framework on mobility patterns vis-a-vis India and the global scale was led by Prof N V Varghese and experts from Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA).

Shared spiritual histories were explored in a joint session on Buddhism and Global diplomacy conducted by Mr. Abhijit Halder (DG) and Dr. Portia B. Conrad from the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), while Dr. Shivani Ghildiyal from the All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) showcased healthcare and traditional wellness traditions. Significance and strategies for protection of intangible heritage and living traditions in India and Nepal was discussed by Ms. Nerupama Modwel, Director-ICH at INTACH. Further, diplomats got to learn a lot on the need and urgency to institute Sustainable Tourism. The course reached its formal culmination in a valedictory ceremony where Ms. Manisha Swami, DDG of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), delivered a closing lecture on the vital role of cultural diplomacy in strengthening people-to-people ties and the role played by ICCR in advancing Indian culture abroad and developing familiarity with foreign cultures in India.

Sessions on Behavioural and Functional Competencies

- The two-day training programme also included sessions to strengthen core competencies of the diplomats. It covered a range of themes, namely Public Diplomacy and Diplomatic Communication, Protocols and Diplomatic Immunities, Soft Skills/ Hospitality Module and Emotional Intelligence.

Yoga, and Lecture & Demonstration on Indian Classical Dance

- Yoga Session led Mr Rajat Sharma, Yoga Instructor
- Bharatnatyam dance demonstration performed by Acharya Jayalakshmi Eshwar.

Institutional Visits

An integral component of the two-week programme was institutional visits and visits to heritage sites, designed to provide the diplomats with experiential insight into India's governance, historical legacy, and diplomacy.

- **Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya:** A museum dedicated to India's post-independence political development, democratic evolution and leadership
- **Gandhi Smriti:** A cultural and historical exposure to the life and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi.
- **Akshardham Temple:** A witness to Indian spiritual and cultural traditions
- **The Kunj:** An exposition of indigenous crafts and art of India
- **International Solar Alliance (ISA):** A specialized visit to the ISA headquarters for understanding international climate cooperation and recent advancements in solar energy initiatives.
- **Embassy Visit:** After the conclusion of the two-week-long training program, the participating diplomats paid a courtesy visit to the Embassy of Nepal, New Delhi, where they were hosted by the Deputy Chief of Mission.

Special Course for Diplomats from Nepal
Valedictory Session

Dean (SSIFS) conferred Valedictory certificates to the 35 diplomats from Nepal for completing their training program at SSIFS on 15 May 2016. In a candid & lively interaction with the Dean(SSIFS), the participants shared their experiences of training and expressed their gratitude to the Government of India for the training program. Amb. Srivastava congratulated them & extended his wishes for their diplomatic careers ahead.

Special Program for Defence Attaché Designates (04–07 May 2026)

SSIFS conducted a four-day Pre-Deployment Empowerment Training Program for 13 Defence Attaché Designates from 04–07 May 2026, aimed at equipping senior defence officers with the diplomatic, strategic, administrative, and communication skills required for overseas assignments. The programme brought together experienced diplomats, senior government officials, strategic experts, and practitioners to provide participants with a comprehensive understanding of India's foreign policy priorities, defence diplomacy, crisis response mechanisms, mission functioning, and media engagement. The programme concluded with interactive engagements and discussions aimed at fostering strategic awareness, inter-agency coordination, and professional adaptability among Defence Attaché designates preparing to represent India abroad.

Training Program for Foreign Diplomats

BRICS Young Diplomats Forum under India's BRICS Chairship (18-23 May 2026)

Following the commencement of India's BRICS Chairship on January 1, 2026, and in the run-up to the 18th BRICS Summit scheduled for New Delhi in September 2026, SSIFS organised the BRICS Young Diplomats Forum (BYDF) from 18 to 23 May 2026. The forum brought together sixteen mid-career diplomats from eight BRICS member countries: Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, and South Africa.

The core objective of this professional course was to advance intra-BRICS cooperation through the three foundational pillars of BRICS: political and security, economic and financial, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Guided by India's BRICS Presidency theme, 'Building Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation, and Sustainability', the BYDF modules prioritised specialised experiential learning. Over four days of rigorous diplomatic engagement, the forum successfully materialised four concrete learning outcomes: a Resilience Playbook, an Innovation Portfolio, a Cooperation Communiqué, and a Sustainability Roadmap. The Forum convened alongside a Plenary Session and a high-level meeting of the Heads of Diplomatic Academies from nine BRICS member countries: Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, and South Africa. The BYDF was instituted to nurture the next generation of diplomats. India previously hosted the BYDF in 2016; after a decade, this 2026 iteration of the BYDF by SSIFS signifies India's continued commitment to promoting capacity building and synergising institutional linkages.

BYDF - Inaugural Address

The training program was inaugurated by Shri Sudhakar Dalela, Secretary (ER) and India's BRICS Sherpa. He underlined the importance of BRICS as a platform for promoting inclusive multilateralism and cooperation across member nations. He added that India approaches its Chairship with a 'humanity first' and 'people-centric' approach.

Dean (SSIFS) introduced the training program, focusing on strengthening academic and diplomatic exchanges through shared learning and cooperation. He also conducted an interactive quiz session on BRICS, encouraging participants to explore the cultural matrix and civilizational diversity of the BRICS nations.

Shri Shambhu L. Hakki, JS (MER) & BRICS Sous Sherpa, addressed the BYDF participants on the core priorities, partnerships, and global impact of India's BRICS Presidency.

BYDF - Thematic Pillars & Day-Wise Experiential Learning:

The forum was mapped around four strategic thematic pillars. Each day was curated by expert mentors and featured in-house sessions and tabletop exercises led by former Ambassadors, senior officials from MEA and line ministries, and experts from academia and think tanks.

Day 1: The Resilience Playbook [18 May 2026]

- **Focus:** Diagnosing and mitigating overlapping global crises, including climate, public health, and digital vulnerabilities.
- **Key Activities:** The curriculum introduced an expert session by Prof. Atul Mishra, alongside a tabletop exercise designed to synthesise operational responses to systemic shocks.
- **Learning:** As part of the first pillar on the opening day, the Resilience Mapping exercise brought the young diplomats together for collaborative discussions on the concept of resilience within an evolving global order. Through group-based deliberations, the exercise encouraged participants to reflect on emerging challenges, including climate change, technological disruptions, food and energy insecurity, public health crises, and geopolitical uncertainties.

Day 2: The Innovation Portfolio [19 May 2026]

- **Focus**: Setting the tone for India's vision of technology-led governance and digital transformation within the BRICS framework.
- **Key Activities:** Curated by Dr. Rudra Chaudhuri from ORF, sessions and exercises featuring over twelve speakers addressed the 'Glocal' nexus of technology and statecraft.
- **Learning:** Participants evaluated frontier technologies such as artificial intelligence, cyberspace governance, biotechnology, semiconductor chip supply chains, and space exploration, to compile a comprehensive strategic technology diplomacy toolkit. The expert speakers reflected on the growing intersections between technological sovereignty and global governance, examining how evolving technological ecosystems are reshaping traditional understandings of strategic autonomy and international cooperation.

Day 3: The Cooperation Communiqué [20 May 2026]

- **Focus:** Multilateral diplomacy, consensus-building, and negotiation dynamics within the BRICS framework.
- **Key Activities:** This track featured a simulation exercise designed to provide participants with a practical understanding of the processes and procedures of a BRICS Summit. The session was conducted by Amb Sanjay Bhattacharya, tracing the evolution of BRICS from its inception to its present-day relevance in global governance.
- **Learning:** Following the presentation, participants were divided into groups and assigned distinct institutional and diplomatic roles. Through simulations of negotiations, briefings, and press interactions, delegates experienced the processes of communication and policy articulation that shape contemporary BRICS engagements. The exercise concluded with group presentations and a mock press conference.

Day 4: The Sustainability Roadmap [21 May 2026]

- **Focus:** Aligning national development priorities with global green frameworks and showcasing India's institutional contributions to the international climate architecture.
- **Key Activities:** The introductory session by mentor Shri R.R. Rashmi set the tone by reflecting on major international platforms addressing environmental challenges, including the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) process.
- **Learning:** The sessions highlighted the role of emerging international initiatives and cooperative platforms such as the International Solar Alliance (ISA), Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA), Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), and the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) in promoting collaborative environmental governance. The sessions concluded with a practical exercise where participants drafted a BRICS Sustainability Roadmap under the supervision of Shri R.R. Rashmi.

Dean's Dinner

Dean (SSIFS) hosted a welcome dinner for the Deans of Diplomatic Academies, their accompanying officials and the BYDF participants on 21 May 2026. The highlight of the evening was deliberations on BRICS as an inclusive platform for cooperation. Brief messages were given by Dean (SSIFS); Mrs. Mariana Moscardo, DDG, Rio Branco Institute, Brazil; Dr. Suadiq Sufian Ali, Institute of Foreign Affairs, Ethiopia; Prof. Mohammad Reza Dehshiri, Dean, School of International Relations, MoFA, Iran; and Amb Aneshwaren Maistry, Director, Economic Diplomacy Training and Support, DIRCO, South Africa. Representing the BYDF participants, Mr. Igor Tkachenko from Russia spoke about the International Association of Young Diplomats and thanked SSIFS for hosting the BYDF.

Day 5: Plenary Session & Valedictory Ceremony [22 May]

- **Plenary Session**

The final day marked the transition from campus-based training to a high-level multilateral meeting, hosted by SSIFS at The Royal Ballroom of The Imperial Hotel, New Delhi. The Plenary session commenced with welcome remarks by Dean (SSIFS), followed by formal statements from the Heads of Diplomatic Academies (HODs) of Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, and South Africa. In the spirit of institutional synergy, Dean (SSIFS) urged the need for shaping the minds of future diplomats, equipping them with foresight and resilience to view diplomacy as the art of understanding civilizations, the science of managing change, and the craft of building trust and the diplomatic academies as laboratories of ideas, nurseries of innovation, and sanctuaries of dialogue. The binding thread of the session was a shared insight that BRICS diplomatic academies are transitionally aligned, viewing collaborative training not merely as an administrative function, but as a strategic laboratory to secure peace, international law, and sustainable development for the Global South.

CONFERENCE OF BRICS HEADS OF DIPLOMATIC ACADEMIES 22 MAY 2026

"We are at a time when diplomacy is required more than ever. And this forum has immense responsibility ro work on the spirit of the BRICS chair - Resiliance, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability. The spirit of BYDF is also to encourage lifelong learning among the official diplomatic corps to empower them face and tackle challenges of the changing world."

Mrs. Mariana Moscardo

"Diplomacy is the only way to solve challenges of the time. Capacity Building is therefore of immense importance and so is the role of BRICS and BYDF, which is all about sharing experiences, resource pooling and practical cooperation in Diplomacy and Capacity Building."

Ms. Zhou Li

"BRICS represents the rising majority of the world in terms of population, resources, and economic power, demanding a new diplomacy rooted in civilizational understanding, intellectual agility, cross-disciplinary curiosity, and inclusive cooperation among diplomats, to navigate the emerging global order in the age of AI and ensure a future world order anchored in international law, peace, dignity, and development."

Amb (Dr.) Yasser Elwy

"Ethiopia believes that global governance and economic representation must reflect the realities of today's world, ensuring that developing nations and Africa have a fair voice in shaping a more just, representative, and sustainable multilateral future through BRICS cooperation and meaningful institutional reforms."

Dr. Suadiq Sufian Ali

"Diplomatic Academies are entrusted with shaping the minds of future diplomats, equipping them with foresight, empathy, and resilience. Diplomacy is not merely negotiation—it is the art of understanding civilizations, the science of managing change, and the craft of building trust. Our academies must therefore be laboratories of ideas, nurseries of innovation, and sanctuaries of dialogue. "

Amb Raj Kumar Srivastava

"Indonesia believes that in an era of geopolitical uncertainty, technological transformation, and evolving global dynamics, BRICS diplomatic institutions must foster practical, inclusive, and sustainable cooperation to adapt training to face contemporary challenges, and equip future diplomats with the capacity for dialogue, mutual understanding, and collaborative leadership to achieve a more balanced, peaceful, and representative global order."

Mr. Yudho Sasongko

"The School of International Relations of Iran believes that sustainability, innovation, and resilience must guide diplomatic education, combining academic excellence with practical experience to prepare future diplomats for intercultural understanding, global challenges, and stronger cooperation among BRICS nations."

Prof. Mohammad Reza Dehshiri

"MGIMO University believes that the diplomacy of the future must combine classical statecraft with strategic thinking, digital literacy, cultural sensitivity, and youth-driven cooperation, enabling BRICS nations to build trust, respect diversity, and strengthen collaboration in an increasingly multipolar world."

Dr. Vladimir Morozov

"South Africa believes that in an era marked by geopolitical uncertainty, technological disruption, economic coercion, and evolving security threats, diplomacy must evolve through agility, multilateralism, ethical leadership, and human-centered values such as ubuntu, empowering BRICS nations to shape a more just, cooperative, sustainable, and peaceful global order."

Amb Aneshwaren Maistry

Valedictory Ceremony & BYDF Family Photo

The Valedictory Ceremony included the presentation of the official BYDF Compendium to the Deans of Diplomatic Academies and the distribution of certificates to all participating international fellows in the presence of their respective academy Heads. The day-wise learning from this program was captured in a 'Compendium' that carried the messages of the Deans and activities of the diplomats at SSIFS.

The BYDF came to a close with a Family Photo of the Deans, Participants of the training program, MEA officials, Officials from resident embassies, and Team SSIFS (at page 14).

Call-On External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar

Following the conclusion of the valedictory ceremony, the delegation of BYDF participants, HODs, and accompanying MEA officials had the distinct opportunity to interact with the Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs, Dr. S. Jaishankar. During this interaction, EAM discussed India's vision for global governance, the need for reformed multilateralism, and the role of an expanded BRICS network in promoting stability within the contemporary international order. He also shared insights on how the core themes of BRICS - resilience, innovation, cooperation, and sustainability contribute directly to global development.

Day 6: Cultural Immersion [23 May 2026]

After completing the program, the BYDF delegation had the opportunity to visit the Taj Mahal, the UNESCO World Heritage site, as part of the Cultural Immersion program. The delegation also visited a One District One Product (ODOP) Centre after visiting the Taj Mahal. The participants interacted with artisans on the practices and artistic traditions that continue to shape Agra beyond its monuments.

To sum up, the BYDF program in its entirety emphasized on experiential learning, collaborative exercises, policy simulations and cultural immersion aimed at strengthening academic and institutional cooperation within BRICS countries.

BYDF Group Together in One Photo

SSIFS Publication of the Month

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. 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.

Within Indian Foreign Service, SSIFS conducts training programs annually at four levels - Induction Training Program of nine months for IFS Officer Trainees at entry level, and Mid Career Training Programs of three weeks duration - MCTP I (for 10-11 years in Service), MCTP II (for 15-16 years in Service), & MCTP III (for 24-25 years in Service).

For Foreign Diplomats, SSIFS conducts every month one specific program which includes three annual flagship programs in the form of - Disarmament & International Security Affairs Fellowship Training program for three weeks, Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD) for two weeks, and Global South Young Diplomats Forum (GSYDF) Training Program for two weeks. Other months, SSIFS organises country, region, grouping, or themes-specific training programs of a maximum of two weeks, emanating from 108 MoUs that SSIFS has signed in the past three decades.

SSIFS has an extensive and expanding pool of guest faculty drawn from experts in the fields of domain competencies like International Relations, Diplomacy, Economy, Trade, Tourism, Technology, Governance, Media & Journalism, Defence & Security, Culture & Indian Knowledge System, Yoga & Ayurveda, and Behavioural Competencies like Emotional Intelligence, Purposeful & Collaborative Leadership, Communications & Negotiations Skills and Progressive Learning & Problem Solving Attitude.

SSIFS is headed by the Dean, a senior Foreign Service Officer in the Ministry of External Affairs. The current Dean is Amb. Raj Kumar Srivastava, IFS officer of the 1997 batch. The Institute is located at Baba Gangnath Marg, Old JNU Campus, New Delhi.

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