



VIDESH SEWA

SUSHMA SWARAJ INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN SERVICE

Special Course for 34 Diplomats & Officials from Nepal
(20-31 July 2026)



Mid Career Training Program-II of 2010 batch
ITPO, Bharat Mandapam on 03 July 2026



FROM DEAN'S DESK

Dear Readers, Dear Friends,

The month of July is the second last month for the induction training program of IFS Officer Trainees. The focus for this month for them was on economic, public and cultural diplomacy. If one has to summarize the month for them, it could be said that they focused on 5Ts – Talent, Technology, Tourism, Trade, and Traditions. The learnings of the month could also be termed as understanding “D4D–Diplomacy for Development”.



How diplomacy contributes towards the nation's growth and contributes towards Viksit Bharat vision has been the outline of the sessions of this month for the IFS Officer Trainees of the 2025 batch.

The second edition of the Special Program for Nepalese diplomats was organised this month for 34 young diplomats from Nepal. The first edition was in May and the third would be in September 2026. This is a special effort made by SSIFS in pursuance of our Neighbourhood First policy. The program was conducted, focusing on challenges of our times, and the model of training was focused on experiential learning through simulation and table-top exercises.

The MCTP-II for IFS Officers of the 2010 batch was completed in the first week of July, with the States attachment for them, where they understood the expectations and priorities of different States from Indian diplomacy. This first-hand experience would definitely give our mid-career diplomats functional ideas about new initiatives to be created in line with expectations and the actions at the ground level in different States.

Our International partnership is continuously growing, now at 110 MoUs, with Cyprus and Seychelles signed in May and June 2026, respectively. For our flagship program PCFD, the 73rd edition of which would be conducted on 20 September-2 October 2026, we already have nominations of 30 Diplomats from 27 countries, and the deadline is still a few weeks away.

Next month is going to be yet another busy month at SSIFS with three major programs being organised. It would be an action-packed final month for IFS OTs of the 2025 batch, with their Valedictory scheduled at the end of August. We would conduct three week long MCTP-III for IFS Officers of 2002-03 batches starting from 17 August, in which we would have a Foreign Policy week, a leadership and Viksit Bharat mindset week, and finally a week in the States. On the foreign diplomats program side, we would have a special program for 50 diplomats from Kenya and Tanzania starting from 5 August for two weeks. One can see that “continuous growth through full capacity utilisation” has become the motto of SSIFS. With best wishes from the SSIFS Family!

Raj Kumar Srivastava

New Delhi

31 July 2026

Training Program for Foreign Diplomats

Special Course for Diplomats & Officials from Nepal **(20-31 July 2026)**

SSIFS organised an intensive two-week Special Course for 34 Diplomats & Officials from Nepal from 20-31 July 2026, with comprehensive modules imparting Domain, Functional, and Behavioural Competencies. Each day of the training program focused on core thematic areas, including Political Diplomacy, Trade, Technology, Global South Institutions, Functional Competencies, Talent & Tourism, Traditions & Cultural Diplomacy, and Environmental Diplomacy. The program blended core theoretical insights with practical workshops, simulation exercises, and experiential field visits to prominent institutional and cultural sites across Delhi and Agra.

Political Diplomacy and Multilateral Frameworks

The training program opened with a focus on core geopolitical dynamics and regional alignment. Following the welcome remarks, Amb Asoke Mukerji set the academic foundation with an analysis of Multilateral Diplomacy through select case studies. Amb Mukerji also conducted a Simulation Exercise taking the United Nations (UN) mediated 2006 peace process in Nepal as a case study. Addressing operational development frameworks, Cmdt. Pankaj Mishra, OSD, Rapid Response Cell (RRC), delivered a dedicated briefing on India's Human-Centric Development Partnership & Humanitarian Assistance.

Trade, Economic Negotiations, and Connectivity

Economic diplomacy and strategic negotiations took centre stage during the trade module. Mr Munu Mahawar, AS (North), analyzed the operational realities of bilateral ties, evaluating India- Nepal Relations in retrospect and prospect. He also outlined the key projects of bilateral cooperation in the last two decades, which bear evidence of mutual prosperity and progress.

The theoretical concepts were translated into practical skills through a hands-on Simulation Exercise on Nepal's LDC Graduation and the WTO Framework by Prof Abhijit Das from the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT). Furthermore, Prof Prabir De from the Research and Information Systems for Developing Countries (RIS) conducted a session exploring trade and connectivity frameworks in the neighborhood.



Global South Institutions and Environmental Diplomacy

Addressing shared vulnerabilities and sustainability, the course highlighted emerging paradigms conceptualized to advance the priorities of the Global South. A dedicated day featured high-level briefings from leading international bodies: Joshua Wycliffe, Director (A&C) at the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA), outlined the future of biofuels; Dr. Amit Mallick, Director (International Cooperation), International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) evaluated global conservation efforts of Big Cats; and a panel discussion featuring three experts: DG Mr. Ashish Khanna, Mr. Karan Mangotra, and Mr. Nar Bahadur explored recent solar energy initiatives at the International Solar Alliance (ISA).



The macroeconomic and resource landscape concluded with a strategic insight into managing energy security amidst heightened geopolitical volatility by Amb Sunjay Sudhir. Dr. Daniel J complemented this module with an extensive SDGs & XDGs Simulation Exercise conducted by Senior Advisor at PAN-IIT.

Functional Competencies Sessions

To equip the visiting officials with highly practical diplomatic capabilities, a series of specialised functional modules were introduced. Mr. Rajesh Duggal (Protocol Officer) briefed the participants on Protocols and Diplomatic Conventions, while Mr. Deepanshu Khurana and Mr. Ihjas Aslam C.S from the XPD division led a workshop on Public Diplomacy. Strategic communication was expanded through a session by Amb Gopal Baglay on Diplomatic Communication, Press Briefing, and External Publicity. Furthermore, Research Associates Dr. Yashna Agarwalla and Dr. Kishlay Kirti from the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) assessed existing frameworks on migration and mobility, and Dr. Binay Prasad (SSIFS) delivered an innovative module titled Gastrodiplomacy: Food for Diplomacy, Diplomacy for Food.



Civilizational Ties, Talent, and Cultural Diplomacy

Trainees participated in a practical Yoga Session led by trainer Mr. Rajat Sharma and explored holistic healthcare with Dr. Shivani Ghildiyal from the All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA). Soft skills and hospitality nuances were parsed by Ms. Divya Singh and Mr. Chetan Sharma from IHM Ashok, while Prof. Paramita Suklabaidya (IGNOU) outlined the operational frameworks of Sustainable Tourism.



Shared cultural heritage was explored in-depth during a joint session on Buddhism and Global Diplomacy conducted by Mr. Abhijit Halder and Dr. Portia B. Conrad bringing in their past experience at the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC). Strategies for the protection of living traditions were delivered by Ms. Nerupama Modwel, Director-ICH at INTACH. At the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Ms. Manisha Swami, DDG (ICCR), highlighted the role of cultural diplomacy in strengthening people- to-people ties, followed by an ICCR lecture and dance demonstration.

Visit to the Grand International Exposition of Sacred Piprahwa Relics

The Diplomats visited the Grand International Exposition of Sacred Piprahwa Relics, titled "The Light & the Lotus: Relics of the Awakened One," at Rai Pithora Cultural Complex, New Delhi. The exposition marks the return and reunification of the Piprahwa relics after over 125 years away during the colonial era. The visit provided insights into India's rich Buddhist heritage, the historical significance of Piprahwa, and the enduring cultural and civilizational links shared across the region.

Field and Institutional Visits

An integral component of the training was experiential learning via carefully curated field visits designed to give the diplomats insights into India's governance, culture, and technological cooperation:

Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya Gandhi Smriti

The Kunj: An exposition highlighting the indigenous crafts and art traditions of India.

Akshardham Temple: A cultural visit witnessing Indian spiritual architecture and heritage.

Embassy Visit: The participating diplomats visited the Embassy of Nepal in New Delhi to interact with senior mission leadership.



Experiencing India's Heritage and ODOP : Visit to Agra

As part of the experiential learning and cultural immersion modules, the delegation undertook a study tour to Agra. The visiting diplomats were mesmerized by the timeless architectural majesty of the Taj Mahal, a UNESCO World Heritage site that embodies the deep-rooted historical and shared cultural tapestry of the region. Complementing this journey through India's rich heritage, the cohort also visited the One District One Product (ODOP) Centre in Agra. The visit offered the diplomats first-hand insights into India's "Viksit Bharat" vision and sustainable economic development at the grassroots level. By observing the promotion of indigenous local crafts and traditional industries, the participants explored how localized micro-enterprises are being integrated into global supply chains—a core tenet of Diplomacy for Development. The tour successfully blended historical appreciation with practical lessons in economic diplomacy, further cementing the close institutional and bilateral bonds between India and Nepal.



Valedictory Session

The two-week course concluded on 31 July with a valedictory session led by Dean (SSIFS). Amb Srivastava outlined the guiding principles of India's foreign policy, and its human-centric and pro-planet approach in diplomacy. In the feedback session, the participants referred to the India-Nepal friendship as "Setu" & expressed their gratitude to the Govt of India for the training program. Dean congratulated them & extended his wishes for their future diplomatic endeavours. Certificates were presented to the 34 participating diplomats from Nepal. In her vote of thanks, Ms. Sulochna Thapa Magar, a participant from Nepal, reaffirmed the bonds of India-Nepal friendship, referencing the term "Setu"—meaning bridge in both Hindi and Nepali languages—to symbolize the enduring connection between the two nations.



States as Strategic Partners: Advancing India's Development Diplomacy

Insights from the MCTP-II State Attachment (2010 Batch)

(04- 10 July 2026)

The Mid-Career Training Programme-II (MCTP-II) concluded with an immersive week-long State Attachment across eleven Indian States, providing officers of the 2010 Batch of the Indian Foreign Service with first-hand exposure to India's evolving development landscape. Through interactions with Chief Ministers, Governors, Chief Secretaries, senior officials, industry leaders, entrepreneurs, district administrations and local communities, the programme highlighted the increasingly important role of States in advancing India's economic growth and international engagement. The attachment underscored that diplomacy today extends beyond political dialogue to facilitating investment, trade, technology partnerships, tourism, innovation, skills and cultural exchanges that directly contribute to national development.

Across the States visited, officers observed a shared ambition to position regional economies as globally competitive destinations. Gujarat showcased world-class financial services through GIFT City and advanced manufacturing through the Dholera Special Investment Region (Dholera SIR), while Maharashtra demonstrated how industrial corridors and logistics infrastructure are driving manufacturing-led growth. Tamil Nadu highlighted its leadership in artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing and human capital, whereas Uttar Pradesh showcased its emergence as a hub for electronics, defence manufacturing and Global Capability Centres. Assam, Odisha and Jharkhand similarly illustrated how their strengths in semiconductors, tea, textiles, mining, tourism and manufacturing are increasingly being integrated into global value chains and international partnerships.

The programme also reinforced the growing convergence between State Governments and the Ministry of External Affairs. States consistently looked to Indian Missions abroad to facilitate foreign direct investment, promote exports, expand tourism, strengthen higher education partnerships and identify new markets for local products. Officers, in turn, shared perspectives from their overseas postings, demonstrating how diplomacy increasingly serves as a bridge between local development priorities and global opportunities.

From Regional Strengths to Global Partnerships

Beyond economic development, the State Attachments offered valuable insights into the diversity of governance models across India. Visits to Aspirational Districts, industrial clusters, innovation centres, technology parks, agricultural enterprises and tourism destinations illustrated how States are aligning local priorities with national and global aspirations. Sikkim's organic agriculture and sustainable tourism, Kerala's wellness economy, Karnataka's innovation ecosystem, Chhattisgarh's digital governance initiatives and Assam's skill development programmes showcased diverse pathways through which regional strengths can contribute to India's international profile.

A recurring theme across the reports was the importance of the Five Ts - Talent, Technology, Tourism, Trade and Tradition as complementary pillars of development diplomacy. Officers observed initiatives promoting foreign language training, international academic collaborations, Migration and Mobility Partnerships, cultural tourism, heritage conservation and startup ecosystems, reflecting an increasingly integrated approach to global engagement. Equally significant was the emphasis on cooperative federalism, where State Governments, the Union Government and Indian Missions abroad work together to advance shared national priorities.

The programme also highlighted sustainability, resilience and inclusive growth as central to India's development trajectory. From Sikkim's organic agriculture and eco-tourism to Kerala's wellness economy and Odisha's green industrialisation, officers witnessed innovative approaches to balancing economic growth with environmental stewardship. Interactions with women-led self-help groups, farmer producer organisations, startups and local entrepreneurs further demonstrated that inclusive development is driven not only by large-scale investments but also by grassroots innovation and community participation.

Exposure to diverse governance models—from border management in Sikkim and semiconductor manufacturing in Gujarat and Assam to artificial intelligence in Tamil Nadu, digital governance in Chhattisgarh and industrial innovation in Maharashtra—provided officers with a comprehensive understanding of the varied developmental priorities shaping India's future. Such experiences strengthen the ability of Indian Missions abroad to present nuanced narratives of India's transformation while identifying tailored opportunities for international cooperation.

The State Attachment Programme ultimately demonstrated that diplomacy is increasingly rooted in India's domestic transformation. As States emerge as active stakeholders in investment promotion, technology partnerships, tourism, innovation and skill development, Indian Missions abroad are playing an increasingly important role in facilitating sub-national partnerships that contribute directly to development outcomes. By strengthening collaboration between the Ministry of External Affairs, State Governments and Indian Missions, the programme equips diplomats with a deeper appreciation of India's federal dynamism and prepares them to advance the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 through a more responsive, development-oriented and globally engaged foreign service.



Ms. Devi Gopinath- State Attachment to Keralam



Ms. Saswati Dey - State Attachment to Odisha



★ मुख्यमंत्री श्री हेमन्त सोरेन से भारतीय विदेश सेवा के अधिकारी श्री मोहम्मद शाहिद आलम एवं श्री सुशील प्रसाद ने शिष्टाचार मुलाकात की।

मुख्यमंत्री श्री हेमन्त सोरेन से आज झारखंड मंत्रालय में भारतीय विदेश सेवा (2010 बैच) के अधिकारी श्री मोहम्मद शाहिद आलम एवं श्री सुशील प्रसाद ने शिष्टाचार मुलाकात की। मौके पर मुख्यमंत्री एवं उनके बीच झारखंड सरकार द्वारा संचालित प्रमुख विकासात्मक योजनाओं तथा राज्य में निवेश एवं आर्थिक विकास की संभावनाओं पर चर्चा हुई। मुख्यमंत्री ने राज्य के विकासात्मक लक्ष्यों को आगे बढ़ाने के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय साझेदारियों के महत्व पर भी बल दिया, जिनमें प्रवासन एवं गतिशीलता (Migration and Mobility) पार्टनरशिप, वन्यजीव पर्यटन की संभावनाएं, कौशल विकास एवं शिक्षा क्षेत्र में सहयोग तथा भारतीय प्रवासी समुदाय की सहभागिता शामिल रहा। साथ ही मुख्यमंत्री एवं भारतीय विदेश सेवा के अधिकारियों के बीच झारखंड की शासन व्यवस्था एवं विकास यात्रा से संबंधित महत्वपूर्ण पहलुओं पर चर्चा हुई। इस अवसर पर राज्य के मुख्य सचिव श्री अविनाश कुमार उपस्थित रहे।

उल्लेखनीय है कि भारतीय विदेश सेवा के अधिकारी श्री मोहम्मद शाहिद आलम वर्तमान में लंदन स्थित भारत के उच्चायोग में कार्यरत हैं, जबकि श्री सुशील प्रसाद नैरोबी स्थित भारत के उच्चायोग में पदस्थापित हैं। भारतीय विदेश सेवा के ये दोनों अधिकारी मध्यावधि प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम (Mid- Career Training Programme) में सम्मिलित होने हेतु झारखंड प्रवास पर हैं।

**Shri Mohd. Shalid Alam and Shri Sushil Prasad
State Attachment to Jharkhand**



**Ms. Vartika Rawat and Shri Nishikant Singh
State Attachment to Assam**

Voices from the Officers

Reflections from the MCTP-II State Attachment (2010 Batch)

This was an immersive, week-long exposure to Assam's governance, development priorities, and sectoral opportunities. Framed within the broader theme of "Diplomacy for Development", the attachment helped in deepening understanding of how India's northeastern states are leveraging the 5Ts—Tradition (Culture), Trade, Technology, Tourism, and Talent (Skill Development)—to drive inclusive growth and global engagement. The attachment combined high-level policy discussions with grassroots field visits, offering a holistic view of Assam's transformation trajectory. The undersigned attended the attachment along with Ms Vartika Rawat, IFS:2010 (Deputy High Commissioner, High Commission of India, Abuja)



Nishikant Singh



Devi Gopinath

- Kerala can benefit from a strategic focus on pitching the state as a high-end destination for Ayurveda-based, curated wellness tourism destination – needs further infusion of capital & technology on improving infrastructure & connectivity.
- Capacity building partner for Kerala's museums and zoos – potential for collaborating with world famous Austrian museums like Kunsthistoriche and the Schonbrunn Zoo.
- Institutional partnerships that can help bridge the competency gaps in the state's higher education sector – 'Focus India' initiative of Austrian universities.
- Further developments of VISL including road and rail connectivity to realise the seaport's full potential as a transshipment hub.
- State's ageing population a big concern – need effective planning and institutional partnerships to help better deliver elder care.

The attachment with the state of Sikkim enhanced my understanding of state administration, importance of connectivity and infrastructure, the practical challenges faced by a Himalayan state with limited resources. Key insights:

- Sikkim integrates sustainable development and environmental conservation into governance. The Organic Sikkim Mission demonstrates how, with proper planning, conventional farming systems can be easily converted into organic farming systems.
- Training and capacity building can rapidly enhance the capacities and its integration in the economic development model can lead to rapid and sustainable growth.
- The state of Sikkim has immense export potential but lacks proper supply chain linkages, especially for international exports.
- Sikkim is a state with immense strategic significance and underscores the interconnectedness of development and national security. Investments in roads, communications, public services, and local livelihoods contribute not only to economic growth but also to strengthening border resilience. Enhancing connectivity is a key factor in further development of Sikkim.
- Sikkim's success in organic agriculture, eco-tourism, environmental protection, and community-based development offer valuable examples that can be highlighted in India's international development partnerships and public diplomacy initiatives.



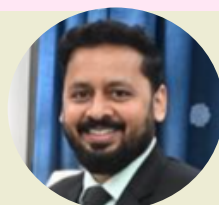
**Pawankumar
Badhe**



Rajesh Naik

The second leg of the field visit involved a trip to Mysore Soaps and Detergents, a century-old institution renowned for its world-class heritage product, Mysore Sandal. Located in the heart of Bengaluru, the company has emerged in recent years as one of the top-performing PSUs in Karnataka. My interaction with the Managing Director offered valuable insights into the company's legacy, which dates back to the First World War when it was established to utilise excess sandalwood production in the State. Having overcome challenging circumstances, the factory has, over several decades, emerged as one of the leading household names in the country. On behalf of the Consulate, I expressed our desire to promote this heritage brand as part of our outreach activities.

The State Attachment proved to be highly beneficial in understanding the multidimensional development strategy being pursued by Uttar Pradesh. The programme provided valuable exposure to the State's institutional architecture, investment promotion mechanisms, skill development initiatives and governance reforms. It also highlighted the increasing importance of closer collaboration between State Governments and the Ministry of External Affairs in advancing India's economic diplomacy.



Nitin Pramod

Advancing Economic Diplomacy through Policy, Trade and Strategic Engagement

The 20th week of Phase II of the Induction Training Programme for the 2025 Batch of IFS Officer Trainees was dedicated to Economic Diplomacy, equipping trainees with an in-depth understanding of the economic dimensions of contemporary foreign policy. Designed to bridge theory and practice, the week brought together distinguished diplomats, policymakers, academics and practitioners to examine India's economic engagement with the world through the lenses of trade, connectivity, sustainability and geopolitical strategy.

The week commenced with Amb. Mohan Kumar discussing Multilateral Diplomacy: Trade and Connectivity, providing participants with practical insights into the functioning of multilateral trade institutions and India's negotiating priorities. This was followed by Amb. Manjeev Singh Puri's session on Climate Change and Energy Diplomacy, highlighting the growing intersection of climate action, energy security and international cooperation.

In collaboration with the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), trainees explored India's development partnerships through sessions on SDGs to LiFE, Maritime Connectivity and the Blue Economy, Global Development Compact and the Global South, and WTO Negotiations and Agriculture. These discussions reinforced India's leadership role in championing sustainable development and South-South Cooperation.

The programme further featured lectures by Amb. Dammu Ravi on Economic Diplomacy, Amb. Sanjay Sudhir on Energy Diplomacy, and Amb. Gopal Baglay on Diplomacy in the Three Ts—Trade, Technology and Talent. Participants also examined the geopolitical implications of the evolving West Asian security environment through an insightful session by Amb. Talmiz Ahmad.

The week also included an immersive Economic and Trade Diplomacy Simulation Exercise led by the Joint Secretary Shri P.S. Gangadhar of Economic Diplomacy Division, enabling Officer Trainees to apply negotiation, analytical and decision-making skills in realistic diplomatic scenarios.

Dissertation Mentorship sessions with Amb Dammu Ravi, Amb Vikas Swarup, Amb Sunjay Sudhir, Capt Anurag Bisen & Dr. Atul Mishra

The week concluded with the dedicated dissertation mentoring sessions by senior diplomats and domain experts, further complementing the academic rigour of the programme, ensuring that trainees integrated classroom learning with research and policy analysis. Through a carefully curated blend of lectures, simulations and academic engagement, the Economic Diplomacy Week strengthened the officers' understanding of the economic foundations of foreign policy and prepared them to represent India's interests in an increasingly interconnected global economy.



Economic, Technology and Functional Diplomacy: Broadening the Diplomatic Toolkit

The twenty-first week of the Phase II Induction Training Programme for the 2025 Batch of Indian Foreign Service Officer Trainees focused on the expanding dimensions of diplomacy through sessions on economic, technological, functional and neighbourhood diplomacy, complemented by practical institutional attachments.

The week began with interactions with the EG&IT Division on functional and technical administration, followed by a session on Cyber Diplomacy, covering cybersecurity, digital governance and emerging international cyber norms. Officer Trainees also completed their Bureau of Security (BoS) Attachment, gaining exposure to security protocols relevant to overseas postings.

The Book Club strengthened analytical thinking and policy communication through presentations on contemporary international affairs. The programme also featured sessions by Ms. Mugdha Sinha, Managing Director, ITDC, on Promoting Brand India through Tourism, highlighting tourism as a tool of economic diplomacy, and Cmde. Pankaj Mishra on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), showcasing India's role as a leading regional first responder. Ms. Satwant Khanelia, Joint Secretary (GEM), shared practical insights on Estate governance & management along with life in Indian Missions.

During the Protocol Attachment, Officer Trainees gained first-hand experience of diplomatic protocol, ceremonial procedures, official engagements and dining etiquette, culminating in a dinner hosted by Chief of Protocol Shri Amit Kumar.

The week concluded with sessions on India's Neighbourhood First Policy by Dr. Constantino Xavier and regional connectivity initiatives, including IMEC, by Mr. Abhishek Agarwal, highlighting the strategic importance of connectivity in advancing India's regional partnerships.

By integrating specialised lectures, institutional attachments and experiential learning, the programme equipped Officer Trainees with the multidisciplinary skills required for effective diplomacy in an increasingly interconnected world.





Officer Trainees Deepen Understanding of Public and Cultural Diplomacy

As part of the 2025 Batch Officer Trainees' Induction Training Programme, the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) organised immersive attachments with the External Publicity and Public Diplomacy (XP) Division of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) from 20–24 July 2026, equipping future diplomats with practical insights into India's public communication and cultural diplomacy.

The three-day attachment with the XP Division (20–22 July) introduced Officer Trainees, along with two Bhutanese diplomats, to the strategic dimensions of public diplomacy, media engagement, digital outreach, and official communications. Sessions covered digital diplomacy, website management, media outreach, management of VVIP visits, and engagement with domestic and international media. An interactive discussion with Shri Randhir Jaiswal, Additional Secretary (XPD) and Official Spokesperson, highlighted the growing importance of strategic communication in advancing India's foreign policy objectives.

The attachment also featured interactions with leading journalists and strategic affairs experts on foreign policy reporting, social media, and national security coverage, complemented by study visits to Doordarshan and NDTV, offering valuable exposure to India's media ecosystem. A highlight of the programme was the Mock Media Interview Exercise, where trainees assumed the role of MEA spokespersons and received personalised feedback on articulation, messaging, and media handling—essential skills for diplomats in today's information-driven world.

The ICCR attachment (23–24 July) provided an in-depth understanding of India's cultural diplomacy architecture and the role of culture as a pillar of foreign policy. Briefings by ICCR leadership introduced trainees to the organisation's global mandate, while lectures emphasised India's civilisational heritage and its contribution to strengthening people-to-people ties. Visits to the National School of Drama, Sangeet Natak Akademi, Lalit Kala Akademi, the Piprahwa Buddha Relics Exhibition, the India International Centre (SAMHITA Project), and the National Gallery of Modern Art offered first-hand exposure to India's rich artistic and cultural institutions.

The programme concluded with an insightful lecture by Shri Raghvendra Singh, former Secretary, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Textiles, on the evolving role of Indian art and culture in diplomacy.

Together, the XP and ICCR attachments provided Officer Trainees with a comprehensive appreciation of strategic communication, media engagement, public diplomacy, and cultural outreach—reinforcing the critical role of both soft power and effective public engagement in advancing India's foreign policy and enhancing its global presence.

Cultural Diplomacy to strengthen People-to-People Ties



Amb Didier Vanderhasselt along with embassy officials from Belgium visited SSIFS on 30 July, 2026

Productive discussions were held at SSIFS between Dean and Amb Didier Vanderhasselt. The discussion revolved around the Institute's functioning, key academic & training activities, interaction with the faculty and brief tour of the campus. The meeting also explored ways to deepen India-Belgium cooperation to strengthen diplomatic training, knowledge exchange, and institutional collaboration.



Forthcoming Program at SSIFS



73rd Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats

21 September – 02 October 2026

The professional course aims to equip participants with knowledge and perspectives on new trends in diplomacy, topical international and regional issues, diplomatic skills and competencies, and to familiarise them with India's history, culture, and foreign policy. As the 1st flagship program started by SSIFS in 1992, the 73rd edition of the Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD) this year will continue to affirm the commitment of India to its friendly countries in sharing the knowledge and expertise acquired in the field of diplomatic training.

25 Knowledge Sessions with Experts in International issues drawn from Diplomacy, International Institutions & Think Tanks

Table Top & Simulation Exercises, Discussion with faculties from Institutions on issues such as Global Biofuels Alliance, Disaster Management, International Solar Alliance initiatives,

Understanding India through visits to heritage sites in UP & MP, session on Ayurveda, enjoying its diverse culture & cuisines



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 110 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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