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VIDESH SEWA

SUSHMA SWARAJ INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN SERVICE

Call on External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar
by **24 IFS Officers of 2014-15 Batches on 8 April 2026**



The Special Course for 23 Diplomats from 11 ASEAN countries was organised at SSIFS during 20-25 April 2026



FROM DEAN'S DESK



Dear Readers, Dear Friends,

April saw two special programs at SSIFS for foreign Diplomats and officials, one - the Special Program for ASEAN Diplomats, and two - the Special Functional Competencies Training Program for Officers from the African Union Commission. Both these programs were curated in a customised manner, keeping in mind the participants' expectations.

SSIFS conducts every year a Mid Career Training Program I (MCTP I) for IFS officers with 10-11 years of experience, who are due for promotion to the level of Director. EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar discussed the contemporary global landscape, as well as opportunities and challenges with the IFS Officers of 2014 & 2015 Batches, when they called on him on 8th April 2026, during their three-week-long MCTP I. On the inaugural day of 6 April, they interacted with Secretary (ER) Shri Sudhakar Dalela & Secretary (CPV & OIA) Ms. Sripriya Ranganathan, who shared their vast experience and guidance with them. MCTP I consisted of 10 days of training at SSIFS, which included 24 sessions on Diplomatic Domain competencies, and 6 sessions each on Functional and Behavioural competencies. The Officers could interact with 25 Senior Diplomats during these sessions; they engaged in three tabletop experiential learning exercises and three panel discussions, where they had interactions with 25 experts from areas connected to Leadership, Economics, Technology, and Innovation. A week-long attachment with one of the ten states completed the MCTP I, developing the important interface with States where the real action of Diplomacy for Development becomes visible, especially in the areas of three Ts of Technology, Trade, and Tourism. Tradition (culture) and Talent (skill development and demography) were also the focus areas in the interactions and visits organised during the States' Attachment. We at SSIFS enjoyed curating this program, which had elements of knowledge and experiential learning, collaborative and analytical exercises, and critical thinking & brainstorming on opportunities and challenges ahead in our journey towards Viksit Bharat. On their part participants contributed through submitting a case study each from their over-decade-long experience in Diplomatic work. These 24 Case Studies in the areas of Development Partnership, Public, Multilateral, & Diaspora Diplomacy, and Citizen-centric Services, would serve as models for replicating elsewhere, as we continue on our path of growth and transformation as a nation.

With our "whole-of-nation approach" to capacity building, we accepted invitations from four eminent institutions in April, to share our best practices and experience in the areas of diplomacy, indian knowledge system, and Viskit Bharat vision.

Next month, SSIFS will host two important programs - one, the Special Program for Diplomats for Nepal; and two, the BRICS Young Diplomats Forum. The ever-busy SSIFS Family extends best wishes to the readers of this newsletter!

Raj Kumar Srivastava
New Delhi
30 April 2026

Training Program for Foreign Diplomats

Special Course for ASEAN Diplomats
(20-25 April 2026)

A Special Course for Diplomats from ASEAN Countries was conducted at Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) from 20-25 April 2026. Over 23 young diplomats from Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries including two from ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) attended the Course.

The 5 day programme had over 17 thematic and experiential learning sessions. The course aimed to equip participating diplomats with a comprehensive understanding of contemporary global issues through the lens of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and India's goal of Viksit Bharat 2047. Each day of the Course was curated to reflect a theme or a set of inter-related areas: Political Diplomacy, Economic Diplomacy, AI, Geoeconomics, Disaster Resilience and Cultural Diplomacy.

The program commenced with welcome remarks by Amb Raj Kumar Srivastava, Dean (SSIFS), who outlined the guiding principles of Indian Foreign Policy and 4Ts (Trade, Talent, Technology and Tourism). A significant highlight was the inauguration of the exhibition for the Third ASEAN-India Artist Camp, showcasing the art and imagination in the form of paintings by artists drawn from India and ASEAN countries. The exhibition was jointly inaugurated by Shri Sanjeev Bhargava, Director of ASEAN India Artist Camps and Dean, SSIFS.The first day was dedicated to Political Diplomacy with a deep dive into India's Act East Policy led by Shri Vishwesh Negi, Joint Secretary (Indo Pacific & Oceania), underlining frameworks under which a retrospective and prospective view of regional engagement have operated. The participants also had two sessions on understanding "Regions, Regionalism and Regional Orders" with a tabletop exercise on Building Regional Orders. Dinner hosted by Dean, SSIFS provided a platform for get-together and participants' interaction with speakers and officials of MEA.

The Second day on Economic Diplomacy was curated by one of our knowledge partners Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS). The ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at RIS, conducted four domain specific sessions focused on trade & connectvity, securing regional value chains, sustainable maritime security & cooperation. Prof. Pankaj Vashist (Coordinator, AIC) and Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna (RIS) discussed trade and investment relations, while Prof. Prabir De addressed the securing of regional value chains in view of fragility of global supply chains. Cmde Sujeet Samaddar led the session on Sustainable Maritime Security and Connectivity covering vast domains and nature of the present maritime cooperation operating globally.









Acknowledging the need for diplomats to be well-equipped in cutting-edge technology and emerging areas was well addressed. The course brought in experts of AI, Dr Subi Chaturvedi, Global SVP, InMobi, who focused on vision and deliverables of India AI Impact Summit (2026). Further, she lined up ethical aspects related to AI and how AI can be leveraged to democratise opportunities for people in the Global South. A half-day workshop on AI was also organised by Dr Preet Deep Singh, Vice President, Apna.co, to train diplomats in AI toolkits enabling Smarter Diplomacy.

The course placed special emphasis on the emerging Blue Economy and evolving Geoeconomics led by Cmde Debesh Lahiri (TERI) who explored synergies in maritime economic cooperation, and Shri Akshay Mathur, Asia Society Policy Institute, who outlined the evolving geo-economics, followed by a Quiz.

India and ASEAN countries are partners in progress and similarly placed in stages of development. The course also provided an opportunity to understand India's achievements and knowledge sharing. Ms Vidushi Chaturvedi, a well-known tech expert, shared insights into India's success and leadership in the field of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and how open-source technologies can do greater good for the Global South.

Dedicated Sessions led by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) provided a better understanding on efforts towards managing disasters and the need for building resilient infrastructure across the ASEAN region. Both the Sessions emphasised on capacity building efforts and sharing of country-specific experiences to address challenges on this front.





Cultural Fusion and Experiential Immersion

To underscore the civilisational linkages between India and ASEAN, Amb Riva Ganguly Das (Former DG, ICCR) and Shri Sanjeev Bhargava (Director, SEHER & Curator, ASEAN-India Music Festival) discussed strategies for people-to-people connectivity. Shri Bhargava highlighted the past experience of organising Artist Camps and Music festival in building bridges among youths spread across India and ASEAN nations. Amb Ganguly outlined the power of Cultural diplomacy and efforts and initiatives undertaken by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) in strengthening ties.

Ms. Nerupama Y. Modwel (INTACH) further expanded on the preservation of intangible cultural heritage and brought out traditions in living heritage from South East Asian nations in an highly interactive session.

The program concluded with a valedictory session where participants received certificates of completion. This Session also served as feedback loop wherein the diplomats expressed appreciation for the diverse domains of diplomacy covered also offered suggestions for curating future programmes.





Experiential learning was a core component of the programme, featuring visits to five centres of excellence and cultural sites:

Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) showcased real-time maritime security cooperation and assessment of security threats. The role and functions of IFC-IOR resonated well with ASEAN Countries all of which have international maritime zones.

Pradhan Mantri Sangrahalaya: Diplomats gained an immersive understanding of India's political journey since independence, emphasising India's major development milestones.

Delhi Darshan: After five days of domain rich sessions, the last day of the programme was dedicated for the visits to three historical and cultural sites in Delhi. The cohort visited Akshardham Temple to appreciate India's spiritual heritage, Gandhi Smriti (a key site to understand Gandhian philosophy), and the Qutub Minar (UNESCO World Heritage Site)--- a witness to thousand years of Delhi's history.




Special Course for ASEAN Diplomats
(20-25 April 2026)



Training Program for Foreign Diplomats

Special Course on Functional Competencies for Smarter Diplomacy for AUC Officials (27 April-02 May 2026)

A Special Course on Functional Competencies for Smarter Diplomacy for African Union Commission officials is being organised at SSIFS from 27 April-02 May 2026. 21 officials from the AUC are participating in the six-day long programme that is focussed on enhancing functional competencies for smarter, more adaptive diplomacy.

Dean (SSIFS), Ambassador Raj Kumar Srivastava, inaugurated the course. In his opening remarks, he highlighted the guiding principles of India's engagement with Africa and outlined the core tenets of Indian foreign policy. He elaborated on the "4Ps" of diplomacy—People, Planet, Prosperity, and Peace—while also touching upon key theories of international relations. He further underscored major Government of India initiatives such as Mission LiFE, Vaccine Maitri, India Stack, and Digital Public Infrastructure, along with multilateral efforts including the International Solar Alliance (ISA), Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), and the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA). He also reflected on the continuing relevance of Kautilya's philosophy in shaping contemporary diplomatic thinking.

Designed as a comprehensive capacity-building initiative, the programme blends policy discussions, practical training modules, and experiential learning opportunities to equip participants with the tools required to navigate the evolving landscape of international relations.

The programme has 11 knowledge sessions that cover a wide spectrum of functional competencies central to contemporary diplomatic practice.

Complementing this are detailed discussions on international law and diplomatic immunities, emerging global priorities through sessions on the Global Development Compact for South-South Cooperation, digital toolkit for summit management, e-governance and the digital transformation of office procedures, India's global public square and the imperative for the Raisina Dialogue.



Knowledge & Experiential Learning Sessions



Sharing Best Practices with other CSTIs on Indian Knowledge System

At the invitation of Capacity Building Commission, Dean (SSIFS) participated in the "Civilisational Wisdom to Civil Service Practices" IKS Sadhana Saptah Workshop held at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy, Hyderabad on 06 April 2026. He spoke about the Indian Knowledge System-based pedagogical models shaping diplomatic training at SSIFS. Patanjali's Yogasutra to understand the International Day of Yoga, applying Ayurvedic principles in our lives to make us more efficient for Viksit Bharat journey, understanding Yogakshema and Prajasukha from Arthashastra to develop a citizen-centric governance model, understanding emotional intelligence and compassion from Bharatmuni's Natyashastra, and so many gems hidden in our Vedic literature were discussed.





Valedictory Session of SCIMUN'26 at the Schindia School Gwalior

At the invitation of the Scindia School for the Valedictory of the Model United Nations Conference SCIMUN'26, Dean(SSIFS) visited Scindia School on 13 April 2026. The annual Conference, which now has a decade-long history, saw participation of more than 200 students from over 25 schools from all over India. Dean(SSIFS) shared the guiding principles of Indian Foreign Policy, and explained how the idea of power as seen in International Relations Theories can be better understood if we start with Chanakya's Arthashastra and our ancient texts. India's rise is considered to be for global good because we are always guided by human centric and environment sensitive approach.









Earth Day Conference at Miranda House

Dean(SSIFS) addressed the national conference themed 'Sustainable Earth: Towards a Better Future', hosted by Miranda House, University of Delhi, on 22 April 2026. Highlighting the virtues of Empathy, Affection, Respect, Trust, and Humility, Dean underscored the need for a lifestyle focused on Ecological Balance, Accountability to Future Generations, Respect for Diversity, Truth & Dharma, and Harmony with Nature. The Pro Planet Approach that guides Indian Foreign Policy was also mentioned including the initiatives like IDY, ISA, CDRI, IBCA, and Global Biofuel Alliance.





Session on India's Strategic Culture at JNU

Dean(SSIFS) addressed the scholars at the School of International Studies (SIS), JNU, on 23 April 2026, on the theme 'India's Strategic Culture: Dilemmas and Choices'. Drawing on rich references from ancient Indian texts, the address by the Dean offered thought-provoking perspectives and deep intellectual engagement to the participants. The interactive session that lasted for 90 minutes focussed on India's principled foreign policy approach which while pursuing national interests ensures global good as well, in the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. G20 Summit and AI Impact Summit hosted by India showcased that thought process and execution.









Training Program for Indian Diplomats

Mid Career Training Program I (MCTP I) for 2014-15 Batches of IFS (06-24 April 2026)

The Mid-Career Training Program (MCTP-I) for 24 officers of the 2014 and 2015 Batches of the Indian Foreign Service was conducted from 06–24 April 2026. Designed for mid-level diplomats transitioning into positions of higher responsibility, the program combined strategic policy discussions, leadership training, regional studies, simulations, and interactions with senior policymakers. It offered a rigorous and future-oriented curriculum aimed at preparing officers for the evolving demands of diplomacy in an increasingly complex global environment. The program included two weeks of intense sessions at SSIFS and one week in the States as a part of the State attachment.

The program commenced with a high-level interaction with Secretary (ER), Shri Sudhakar Dalela, setting the tone for two weeks of intensive learning and reflection. His address highlighted the changing contours of global diplomacy and the expanding responsibilities of Indian diplomats in areas ranging from strategic partnerships to citizen-centric services. Participants also had the privilege of calling on Secretary (CPV & OIA), Ms. Sripriya Ranganathan, who discussed the critical role of consular diplomacy, overseas Indian engagement, and passport and visa reforms in enhancing India's global outreach.

A major thematic focus of the program was the changing global order and India's strategic positioning within it. Distinguished speakers such as Ambassador Anil Wadhwa and Ambassador Arun Singh led sessions on the shifting balance of power, the emergence of multipolarity, and India's tactical and strategic playbook in navigating relations with the United States, Europe, and other key actors. Participants examined how major power competition, economic fragmentation, technological rivalries, and regional conflicts are reshaping international relations. These sessions encouraged officers to think beyond conventional bilateral frameworks and adopt a more integrated geopolitical perspective.

Another important cluster of sessions dealt with India's extended neighbourhood and regional diplomacy. Senior officials from the Ministry briefed participants on developments in Bangladesh, Myanmar, the Gulf, West Asia, Eurasia, China, and India's Himalayan neighbours. Discussions led by Shri B. Shyam, Shri Aseem R. Mahajan, Dr. M. Suresh Kumar, Shri Mayank Singh, Shri Nagaraj Naidu, Shri Sujit Ghosh, and Shri Munu Mahawar provided nuanced assessments of regional transitions and India's policy responses. These sessions highlighted the need for agility, historical understanding, and calibrated statecraft in managing India's diverse strategic priorities.





MCTP I - Knowledge Sessions on Foreign Policy & Diplomacy





















MCTP I - Viksit Bharat Mindset & Leadership Sessions



MCTP I - State Attachment in Madhya Pradesh



Courtesy meeting with the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Dr. Mohan Yadav

Dr. Yadav spoke of MP's ambitions for global investment, tourism promotion, and the role of the Indian diaspora in furthering the state's interests.



Courtesy call on the Governor of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Mangubhai C. Patel

The Governor emphasised the importance of understanding India's states deeply before venturing to represent the nation abroad.











Meeting with Women's Self-Help Groups at Gram Panchayat — listening to stories of grassroots enterprise and resilience



At the sacred Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga, Ujjain — one of the twelve Jyotirlingas of India

SSIFS Publication of the Month

Restricted

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

DIPLOMATIC CASE STUDIES FOR VIKSIT BHARAT BY 2014 AND 2015 BATCHES OF IFS



Mid Career Training Programme I
(06-24 April 2026)

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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