

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
ON THE OCCASION OF CALL ON BY THE
PROBATIONERS OF INDIAN FOREIGN SERVICE 2023 BATCH**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, August 19, 2024

I warmly welcome you to Rashtrapati Bhavan. My congratulations to you all on becoming part of the prestigious Indian Foreign Service, which has served the nation with distinction.

I can see from the profile of this batch, that the diversity of India in terms of culture, region and linguistic background is well represented. Many of you also have rich work experience from varied fields. I am also delighted that we are gradually improving on the gender balance in this service.

I was happy to hear from you about your intensive training experience. Being a good diplomat requires a unique set of skills: you must be an effective communicator and a strategic thinker. At the same time, you must have deep political and cultural understanding of both your host country, as well as of India.

I am told that you will all soon leave for your first postings abroad, for foreign language training. My advice to you would be to learn as many languages as you can, and be open to embracing new cultures, people, and technology. These skills and sensibilities will make you an effective and well-rounded diplomat.

Dear Officer Trainees,

Foreign policy is not an abstract exercise or elitist pursuit. It is an extension of domestic policies, aimed at securing a country's political, economic and security interests, and territorial integrity. Hence, it is your

responsibility to not only secure our interests, but also to shape the global agenda, with the overarching strategic objective of achieving '*Viksit Bharat*' by 2047. And I am certain that a world driven by the Indian ethos of acceptance, harmony and oneness will be a prosperous, peaceful and just world.

You are entering the world of diplomacy at a very exciting time. The scope and scale of India's bilateral and multilateral engagements have been continuously increasing. We are engaging the world with renewed confidence and vigour, and helping find solutions to global challenges; be it climate change, disaster resilience, cyber security, pandemic response, or taking a principled stand against international terrorism. Today, we are seen as a reliable '*Vishwa Bandhu*', in a fast-changing and conflict-ridden world.

In my recent visits abroad, I have seen for myself, the immense goodwill generated by our development partnership projects, in the field of infrastructure, education, health and agriculture; particularly in countries of the Global South. There is also tremendous interest in Indian soft power, including films, Yoga, Ayurveda and Indian art, crafts, dance and music.

I have also sensed that our friends and partners abroad now have very high expectations from us, which we must deliver on. This is where your role becomes crucial. You must engage constructively with a wide range of stakeholders in your host country, including the business and scientific community, cultural representatives, and the media.

Equally importantly, you have to carefully cultivate and promote the crucial role played by our vibrant Indian Diaspora. In my meetings with them during my travels abroad, I have been impressed by their many achievements, and their enthusiasm to connect and contribute to their motherland.

Please remember that in times of distress, the Indian Mission is a second home for Indian nationals abroad, and you are their only hope. Vande Bharat Mission (COVID), Operation Ganga (Ukraine), Operation Kaveri (Sudan) and Operation Ajay (Israel), where our diplomats brought millions of Indians back home safely, were exemplary efforts. You must continue this proud tradition of always being there for our fellow Indians abroad.

Dear Officer Trainees,

If our achievements and opportunities are many, so are the challenges. The world today is in flux. In many places, we have war-like situations, humanitarian crises and disorder, with new threats and non-conventional challenges.

Emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, quantum computing, and machine learning offer new tools for diplomacy and foreign policy. However, when it comes to their governance or regulation, there is still uncertainty, as these technological advancements also do not follow geographical borders. Hence, we need to be cautious and alert. It will be your job to respond to all these challenges in an effective manner and provide solutions that secure our national interest.

Dear Officer Trainees,

Do remember, that you don't just represent the Government of India. You represent 1.4 billion Indians, and their hopes and aspirations. You represent our diverse and pluralistic culture, you represent the richness of our 5000 year old civilization, and you represent a society, that in its essence, is a force for good and for stability in an un-predictable world. This places great responsibility upon each one of you.

You have already proved your abilities by clearing one of the toughest exams, and becoming part of a distinguished service. Very few get this

privilege to serve the nation and the people, and I hope that you will honour this privilege, by upholding the principles of integrity and probity in everything you do.

May you keep our Tricolour flying high, and our proud traditions alive wherever you serve.

Thank you!
Jai Hind!