

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
ON THE OCCASION OF CALL ON BY THE INDIAN FOREIGN SERVICE
OFFICER TRAINEES**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, May 14, 2019

1. I warmly welcome you to Rashtrapati Bhavan. It is always a pleasure for me to interact with our youth, and more so, when they happen to be the ones ready to enhance our external relations and contribute to nation building.
2. I congratulate you on joining the Indian Foreign Service, and the two Officer Trainees from Bhutan, the Royal Bhutan Foreign Service. It is, indeed, a privilege to represent one's country. This privilege entails a deep commitment from you to serve the people of India. I hope you will attend to this higher call of duty with pride, humility and dedication. I am happy that as a group, you represent India's diversity in every sense of the term. It is equally satisfying that we continue to see greater gender balance in the newer batches of the Indian Foreign Service. These bode well for the Service and our nation.

Dear Officer Trainees,

3. You have had an intensive 6-month training at the Foreign Service Institute. It has given you an all-round exposure to the political, economic and cultural facets of India. You have learnt of our national interests and its linkages with the outside world; of our hard-power options and soft-power influence; of our expansive global agenda; and of the geopolitical complexities facing us. You have honed your skills and are all set to march on. You are among the best and the brightest in the country and now you have to prove that you are the best and brightest in the art of diplomacy as well.
4. There could not be a better time to join the Indian Foreign Service. India's role and influence in the international arena is expanding. Geopolitics and geo-economics are drawing Asia at the centre of

global power relations. And in this matrix, India has an important role to play - as a driver of global growth and as an influential voice in global governance.

5. We are living in an age of rapid changes. As a country, we have taken 70 years to become an economy of US Dollars 2.5 trillion, but would take just 7 years to double the figure! If this be the projection, you can imagine the scale of responsibility you have before you - to foster peace and stability; to scout for investments; to look for technology partnerships; to secure new markets and to create frameworks to tackle conventional and non-conventional threats- from cyber security to energy security and more.

Dear Officer Trainees,

6. Your work abroad primarily entails securing our national interests and promoting India's image. That being said, you are also responsible for fostering growth and development in the country at the ground level. For example, if we are aiming to enhance the income of our farmers, you have to take initiative and work hard to look for new markets for our exports. Similarly, if we are to construct a world-class High Speed Train in the country, you have to interface and engage with relevant global financial and technology entities to make the project a success. Your role and contribution to India's progress and prosperity are as important as that of your colleagues in other branches of the Civil Service and you have to work with them hand-in-hand to attain our larger goal.
7. Along with fostering Development, we have brought engagement with our Diaspora at the centre of our external relations. This year we are celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, our greatest Pravasi. In his struggle overseas, he relentlessly fought for the welfare of our people. Gandhiji should be an inspiration for you as you work to serve our community abroad. In my visits overseas, I have given high priority to meeting our brothers and sisters abroad. Our External Affairs Minister has done exceptional work to make our consular duty and community outreach service-oriented. She has provided humane touch to public service. This has received appreciation from far and wide and so has the work of our Missions who have been sensitive to

the needs of our people. As professional diplomats, you must develop an attitude and mindset of serving the people. At times, you may be required to go that extra-mile to give them a helping hand. Such sensitivity and human approach in your work will go a long way in enhancing our public-service delivery. I would also urge you to regularly meet our community members and look after their welfare.

8. I have paid State Visits to several countries, and I wish to share some of my experiences with you. Today, the international community, indeed, has greater appreciation of India and its global standing. Leaders from across the world are keen to visit India and strengthen bilateral ties with us. Nations are looking for solutions to global challenges from us – be it climate change, cyber security, humanitarian disasters or combating extremism and terrorism. These open unprecedented opportunities but also pose new challenges for our diplomacy. In such a scenario, as a country and as diplomats we must bring “strategic thinking” at the center of our working more than ever before. Thinking into the future and looking at the world holistically will help us anchor our interests better.
9. I also experienced firsthand the value that communication and use of cultural idiom bring to our external engagement. You talk to your interlocutor in his or her language and you see an instant connect developing. I understand you will shortly be leaving for your language posting. Do your best to master the languages you would be studying. On my visits abroad, I have had the opportunity to see how well some of your colleagues have done to achieve higher levels of specialization in foreign languages. They make us proud. I encourage you to follow them and do even better. And along with language skills, you must also be open to embracing cultures, peoples and technology. These skills and sensibilities will unlock a whole new world for you.
10. As you all know, we have two distinguished Officer Trainees from Bhutan with us. To them, I wish to say, we take great pride in India-Bhutan friendship. I hope the interaction and engagement you have had with your course-mates will further strengthen our unique and special friendship.

11. To the IFS Officer Trainees, I would like to say - you are members of a very distinguished service. The IFS has brought us many achievements. The high responsibility of strengthening our bilateral relations and global partnerships with countries rests on you. In this endeavour, you have to deepen political and security engagement, expand trade and economic collaboration and foster closer people-to-people relations. I am convinced that you will work with dedication, and with integrity and honesty to bring greater peace and prosperity to the country. And while you do so, I urge you to be ever empathetic to those you serve, especially the less-privileged. The people of India have high expectations from you and you must live up to them.

12. I wish you success in your career ahead.

Thank you. Jai Hind.