

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

Rashtrapati Bhavan, September 29, 2022

I am glad to welcome you all to Rashtrapati Bhavan. Let me first congratulate each one of you on joining the Indian Foreign Service! I can feel your enthusiasm and dreams. You must be impatient to step out and make your mark. I appreciate your attitude because that is what is going to transform India.

Youngsters today have far more career options than we had when we were young. You are among the brightest brains of your generation. You could have chosen any lucrative career. But you have chosen to serve the nation. The IFS, in particular, offers an opportunity to do so in a career that is as challenging as it is rewarding. It is a great honour and privilege to represent one's country on the international stage. In the decades to come, you will shape India's relations with the world. Indeed, you will be playing a crucial role in how India too shapes the world.

Dear Officer Trainees,

The 35 IFS Officer Trainees of the 2021 batch, I am told, include 15 lady Officer Trainees. While I wish the number was even higher, it is heartening to see that the trend is inching towards better gender balance. You come from the entire length and breadth of the country. You also bring with you to the Service a diversity of professional background – from engineering and medicine to management and humanities. Many of you have had working experience and some have also worked in the government.

I am sure you must have made the best of the great learning opportunity you had when you attended the Foundation Course at

the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration. On top of the classroom learning about the art and craft of administration, some of you have already visited 'aspirational districts' and the rest of you will do so soon. That would make you well-versed with the nuances of ground reality and the citizens' expectations. You have also successfully completed the Induction Training Programme at the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Services, and now look forward to your language postings abroad.

You are, thus, about to enter an exciting phase of your career. With the knowledge of various languages, you will be at home in the given place. You will explore other cultures and other ways of looking at the world. You will also carefully cultivate and promote the important role played by the Indian diaspora around the world.

It is going to be all the more exciting as you are beginning your career in Foreign Service at a time when India has emerged on the world stage with a new self-confidence. The world, too, is looking at India with new admiration. The recent years have witnessed new initiatives in our bilateral and multilateral relations. In several global forums, India has made decisive interventions. India's leadership in several fields has become unchallenged now. India also plays an important role in the developing South and as a frontline State in the fight against terrorism.

Dear Officer Trainees,

India's stronger position comes on the basis of its economic performance, among other factors. While leading economies of the world are still trying to overcome the effects of the pandemic, India has stood up again and started to move on. As a result, India's economy is registering one of the fastest growth rates. In fact, the global economic recovery, to an extent, rests on India.

The other reason for India's standing on the world stage is its ethos. Our relations with the rest of the world are governed by our age-old values. The Indian Foreign Service offers you a unique

opportunity to project India's proud civilisation, heritage and culture, together with its developmental aspirations, to the rest of the world. When we say we look at the world as one family, it is not merely a saying. During the first two years of the pandemic, we provided material help to a large number of nations, be it the supply of life-saving equipment or of the vaccines manufactured in India. It is this compassion and sensitivity that marks our dealings with all.

At the same time, national interest remains paramount. The call for an Atmanirbhar Bharat builds on the principle of 'India First'. This quest for self-sufficiency, I believe, has its roots in Gandhiji's call for Swadeshi. The Father of the Nation believed in balancing our responsibility to the world with our responsibility to our fellow citizens. India is a developing economy, and it needs resources to wipe out poverty.

Dear Officer Trainees,

It is not uncommon to hear that the world is becoming more complicated day by day. Well, change is the only constant, but in the last two centuries, the speed of changes has increased. In this century so far, the pace of change has been dramatic, to say the least. Ongoing transformations on multiple fronts offer great opportunities as well as great challenges. New technologies give us hopes of better healthcare, for example, but they threaten existing business practices too. We can use technology to reach out to those on the margins. At the same time, technology also resets the security paradigm with new threats. As a nation, we have before us a chance to reset our choices.

This is also the time of climate change. The world has woken up to the dangers of exploiting the environment. Humanity urgently needs to find ways to reverse the effects of global warming and save the fragile planet. All nations must join hands in this mission, in inventing and sharing technologies. India has done well in

focusing on the alternative sources of energy, taking a lead in the world.

It is amid this fast-changing world, with its opportunities and threats, that your role becomes critical – more so than ever before. Navigating through these difficult waters and ensuring the best for India and also for the world will test your intelligence. But I have immense faith in your education and your training. I am confident that you will respond to the challenges of the future in the best possible manner, in the best interests of your fellow citizens.

I congratulate you for having taken the first step on this path, and I wish you the best for your journey ahead.

Thank you,
Jai Hind!