

FOREWORD

In response to a need expressed by members of the Department of External Affairs and their spouses regarding the present rules and practice in diplomatic relations, the Posting Services Centre has coordinated the preparation of this publication, which is not intended to serve as an erudite treatise, but rather as a simple guide. Its purpose is to be useful to those who have recently joined the Department of External Affairs, to those who are leaving for a foreign post, and to all those who wish to enhance their knowledge on questions of diplomatic practice.

Despite the fact that social behaviour has become less formal these days, there are still basic rules governing relations between nations and their representatives in foreign countries. "Protocol" is more or less the code which regularizes the manner and the style of conducting diplomatic relations. It is a science and an art. The rules are often exact, but their application needs a personal touch and flexibility since they apply to relations between human beings.

It is said that many protocol rules are merely polite gestures; this is true. However, certain ways of behaving or of expressing one's views or feelings are regarded as the "right" ones. It is somewhat like the grammar for the language. Certain rules may seem strange, rigid at times, but they have been accepted over the years in the diplomatic milieu. It is a question of learning them.

This guide tends more naturally to apply to fairly formal diplomatic occasions. However, as the main job in a diplomatic post abroad is to get to know the people as well as the country, too much stress should not be put on the "formalities" to be observed. Just as common sense and normal courtesy are often the right courses to follow, being natural and friendly will help immeasurably towards creating the climate which is conducive to good, amicable relations in many circumstances.

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