**Women Officers in Helicopter Stream of Indian Navy**

 In yet another first in the history of Indian naval aviation, two women officers have been selected to join as “Observers” (Airborne Tacticians) in the helicopter stream. They would in effect, be the first set of women airborne combatants who would be operating from warships. Earlier, entry of women was restricted to the fixed wing aircraft that took off and landed ashore.

These officers, SLt Kumudini Tyagi and SLt Riti Singh, are a part of a group of 17 officers of the Indian Navy, including four women officers and three officers of the Indian Coast Guard (13 officers of Regular batch and 04 woman officers of Short Service Commission batch) who were awarded “Wings” on graduating as “Observers” at a ceremony held on 21 September 2020 at INS Garuda, Kochi. The ceremony was presided by Rear Admiral Antony George NM, VSM, Chief Staff Officer (Training) who presented the awards and coveted wings to the graduating officers. In addition, the Chief guest also awarded the ‘Instructor Badge’ to six other officers, (five from the Indian Navy including a woman and another from Indian Coast Guard) who had successfully graduated as Qualified Navigation Instructors (QNI) on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Rear Admiral Antony George while complementing the graduating officers highlighted the fact that it is a landmark occasion wherein for the first-time women are going to be trained in helicopter operations which would ultimately pave way for the deployment of women in frontline warships of Indian Navy

The officers of the 91st Regular course and 22nd SSC Observer course were trained in air navigation, flying procedures, tactics employed in air warfare, anti-submarine warfare and exploitation of airborne avionic systems. These officers would serve on-board Maritime Reconnaissance and Anti-Submarine Warfare aircraft of the Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard.

From the 91st Regular Observer Course, Lieutenant Hitesh Singh was awarded the Uttar Pradesh Trophy on being adjudged ‘First in the Overall Order of Merit’ while Lt Anuj Kumar was awarded the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command Trophy for being adjudged ‘Best in Flying’. Lt Hitesh Singh was also awarded Sub Lt RV Kunte memorial Book Prize on being adjudged ‘Best in Ground Subjects’. From 22nd SSC Observer Course SLt Kreeshma R was awarded the Book Prize for being adjudged ‘Best in Overall Order of Merit’.