

YEP- THE VESSEL THAT MOULDED ME

I Cadet Mailin Dolkar Lepcha, from 5 Bengal Battalion NCC, West Bengal and Sikkim Directorate was given the wonderful opportunity to partake in the selection process for YEP 2022

Let me start by introducing what YEP stands for, what it is and how I prepared for it

YEP stands for Youth Exchange Program.

This program is one of the many programs NCC conducts where cadets from all over India are selected to represent country as well as the culture and traditions which are practiced in this vast land.

The program includes 11 countries that are Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Russia, Singapore, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Turkmenistan. These countries send their delegation and send their cadets to India as well.

To create an increased awareness and appreciation of each other's socio-economic and cultural realities

As of now more than 100 cadets proceed abroad on YEP annually.

Now that we have an introduction to what YEP is about, let me share my experience and how the procedure for selection took place

Firstly, there was an interview conducted for the chosen cadets by their respective Battalions.

I was fortunate to be selected from Southfield College, Darjeeling along with me one more Cadet, Cadet Pandamit Lepcha were selected

This was an online procedure, the officer who conducted it was our ADM Col. M.P. Dinesh.

He asked us basic questions like our knowledge about India, its geography and current leaders along with questions about the NCC.

Having cleared my initial interview I was selected for the next one.

I was required to fill out my bio data on a form for the YEP selection

The second interview was held in Siliguri by the 16th Bengal Battalion NCC.

Along with the interview there was a written test which lasted for about 3 hours. In addition to this, a DST (Drill Standard Test) was conducted.

Firstly, the DST was conducted to check our bearing and drill by the Commanding officer Col. Balraj Gurung, followed by the written test, in which our General Awareness about India and the world was tested along with the NCC specialized subjects.

The written test and interview were conducted simultaneously.

The officer who took the interview asked me questions regarding myself, my hobbies, interests and achievements and my ambition in life, checking my proficiency in English and my knowledge along with personality.

After our tests were over, the results were given, Col. Balraj Gurung started to shortlist candidates for Group Discussion.

There were SDs and SWs who were shortlisted and the rest were sent back to their homes.

During group discussion we the SWs chose to speak on the topic of Offline vs Online education.

We all sat around the Commanding officer and started the group discussion after the SDs were finished with theirs.

The officer had asked us to rank the SDs after their Group Discussion and the SDs were required to do the same for us.

The competition was quite stiff to be selected as each cadet had great points.

Finally we all ranked each other on who spoke the best.

The commanding officer took the final discussion.

I made it through the next round along with 6 other SWs and 6 SDs

The next interview was held in my Battalion, the 5th Bengal Battalion NCC.

We were required to perform DST once again followed by an interview.

This time, there was a board of officers along with our Group Commander Brigadier Sanjeev Jarial

The Brigadier asked us questions about our stance on topics like should women be allowed in the army, as well as about the current events taking place in India and also about our culture and why we should be selected, our biggest achievement as well as regret, and our knowledge about the NCC.

After the interview was over, the officers took the decision on who would be appropriate for the next interview.

I successfully got through once again.

Now there were just 4 SWs and SDs selected to compete in the group level.

The third interview was conducted once again in the 16th BN Bengal Battalion NCC,

This was an online interview and the interviewers were the ADG of West Bengal and Sikkim Maj Gen U.S. Sengupta and a board of officers.

This interview was quite brief approximately 5 minutes as the officers had to interview about 24 cadets from the various Battilons in West Bengal and Sikkim in a span of 2 hours

We were the first group, and as my turn had come, I walked into the office of the Commanding officer where the computer was set up and saluted the officers and I was asked to then be seated, the ADG began with the question "Introduce yourself" followed by questions about the neighbouring countries like Bhutan and Sri Lanka, and questions about our experience in NCC, the specialized subjects and current events. The other cadets too were asked similar questions.

After our turn was over, we were called upon by Col. Balraj Gurung to ask us how our interview went and the question which were asked. We were all then dismissed and sent on our ways. Now all that was left to do was to wait for the final selection.

The way i prepared for these interviews and outcome can be credited to hardwork and to the guidance of my ADM Col.M.P Dinesh, who had taken it upon himself to coach and guide us for our interview and tests. He did not just take the cadets from 5th Bengal Battilon NCC Darjeeling but also the cadets of 16th Bengal Battilon NCC Siliguri under his wing.

We would have online classes in the morning where sir would ask us to prepare on topics of global relevance.

He took out the time to teach us properly about the NCC specialized subjects and how we should go about the interview, and if we had any queries he was steadfast in clearing them out.

If there was ever a moment of disbelief and nervousness among one of us, Sir would always reassure us about our capabilities

Subedar Tilak Raj from my Battilon and other cadets too would help me in improving my DST as my DST didn't have proper polishing.

My Commanding officer Col.A.S. Bali SM too would have me come visit the Battilon to check upon my progress.

The Commanding Officer of 31st BN Battilon NCC, Col.Abrar Ahmed too gave me guidance on how i should prepare on the various cultures and traditions of India as I was fortunate to have met him during an EBSB online camp, he too was quite motivating and inspiring on how i should give my best efforts. Col. Balraj Gurung too had a helping hand for he briefed us on questions that are likely to be asked before the interview.

I am extremely grateful to all of them for their help and guidance as well as my family for their support which would rejuvenate my spirit and broaden my knowledge and skills.

I had started to download various News Apps and subscribing to online news channels along with reading material about the current events, international bodies and how to better understand them on an international level as well as national level.

I read upon the culture of West Bengal and Sikkim as a whole and the important monuments and memorials.

Waking up in the morning I would run through the latest news articles, brushing upon general knowledge and then going to practice my DST, and proceeding to go through my Specialized Subject Army Wing.

All in all I was moulding myself and bettering my understanding of how to answer questions.

Confidence and self belief is something that needs to be ingrained in us all to be able to achieve what we wish and desire and this is a true testament I feel.

Where I was lacking in any sphere I tried to work harder to make myself more presentable and worth getting selected.

This experience has been a privilege and a great honour, during my interviews I was also able to befriend other cadets from various Battalions and tried to learn from them as well.

It has without a doubt, improved the person I once was on an intellectual as well as personal level.

Having wrapped up how I went about the procedure and my experience I would like to end by saying, we all are capable of amazing things, once we understand ourselves, our strengths and weaknesses. Having a guiding hand and motivation will help you move mental mountains we may even be able to climb them. I am a part of the very first batch of NCC cadets of Southfield College as previously Southfield was not affiliated to the NCC and was quite green and didn't know how things worked in the NCC, but now I understand the workings, the hierarchical structure as well as what an impact programs like this have on a person. And every step of my endeavours during this process has surely been worth it, so I would encourage you all, fellow readers to take part in the opportunities NCC has curated to offer, you only live once so why not see what the best version of yourself you can be through programs like this.

Thank you and Jai Hind