



THE FEAST

THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS' CLUB OF SOUTH
ASIA

INAUGURAL EDITION 2025–2026

Welcome to The Feast

Friends, welcome to the first edition of the “Feast”, the newsletter of our club. We decided to rename our old newsletter “Beast”. The old name holds great memories, but we decided that going by a new name feels like the perfect fit for the next chapter of our club’s life, which will be more exciting and celebratory with your participation and good wishes.

As you all know, the present Management Team assumed office on June 1, 2025, following the elections held on May 24, 2025. Over the last year, our club has made steady improvements in almost every sphere. The ambience has improved, with increased visits of the members with their friends and families, cultural evenings being staged, and important talks and discussions by

distinguished persons being organised with greater frequency. Some of the important occasions that marked the club in the last one year are listed below:

IAPC General Assembly 2025



September 25–27, 2025 • New Delhi

“IAPC General Assembly 2025, New Delhi, and the IAPC presidency being transferred from the London Press Club to FCC South Asia”

The 2025 General Assembly of the International Association of Press Clubs was held in New Delhi from 25–27 September 2025 and was hosted by the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of South Asia.

An opening reception at FCC South Asia headquarters preceded the Assembly. Welcome remarks were delivered by Dr. Waiel Awwad, President of the FCC, Maurice Reilly, and Jaroslaw Włodarczyk.

Delegates attended a cultural programme featuring traditional Indian dances representing different regions of the country.

The Assembly brought together representatives from press clubs in India,

Australia, Poland, and the United States.

Delegates included Julie Hare (National Press Club of Australia), Patricia Kranz (Overseas Press Club of America), Maurice Reilly (National Press Club of Australia), Magdalena Rigamonti (Press Club Poland), Jaroslaw Wlodarczyk (Press Club Poland), Dr. Waiel Awwad, (President, FCC South Asia) and Dr. Prakash Nanda, (Secretary, FCC South Asia).

During the official session, the IAPC presidency was formally transferred from the London Press Club to FCC South Asia. Dr. Waiel Awwad was confirmed as the new President of the IAPC.

The new Executive Board began with:

President: Dr. Waiel Awwad (FCC South Asia).

Vice President: Maurice Reilly (National Press Club of Australia)

The meeting highlighted international cooperation among press clubs, leadership transition within the IAPC, and support for journalists covering conflict

Honouring the Legends

Sir Mark Tully



“The FCC auditorium will now bear his name.”

1 - The Foreign Correspondents' Club of South Asia gathered for a deeply moving evening on 12, Feb, 2026 to remember and honour the remarkable life and legacy of Sir William Mark Tully—one of the most respected voices in international journalism, a long-time friend of our community, and one of our founder members.

The gathering was not only a formal event of journalists and editors but also a heartfelt coming together of colleagues, friends, and admirers who wished to reflect on the extraordinary contribution he made to journalism and to the understanding of India around the world.

Members of Sir Mark's family expressed their gratitude for the overwhelming support and tributes they have received since his passing. They spoke about how deeply touched they were by the affection shown to him by colleagues and audiences across India and around the world. For them, the outpouring of memories and appreciation reaffirmed how widely respected and loved he was—not only as a journalist but also as a person known for his kindness and generosity.

Sir Mark's long career in the BBC and post-BBC years reflected a life filled with curiosity, commitment, and passion for storytelling. Before entering journalism, he explored different professional paths, including teaching and charity work, before eventually joining the BBC. His early posting in Delhi proved to be a turning point. It was here that he began reporting and discovered his calling as a journalist, covering stories that connected the lives of ordinary people with the larger currents of history.

Colleagues who worked with him recalled how deeply engaged he was with the people and cultures of India. He was known for speaking Hindi and engaging comfortably with people from all walks of life—from senior political leaders to ordinary citizens in small towns and villages. This ability to listen and connect gave his journalism a depth and authenticity that set him apart.

Veteran journalists shared stories about how Sir Mark mentored younger reporters and encouraged them to pursue journalism with integrity. Many credited him with shaping their careers and teaching them the fundamentals of responsible reporting. He believed strongly that journalism should serve the public and reflect the realities of everyday life, not just the narratives of power.

Beyond journalism, Sir Mark was also known for his deep intellectual and spiritual curiosity. His books and broadcasts reflected a thoughtful engagement with India's culture, traditions, and social complexities. Works such as *No Full Stops in India* and *India in Slow Motion* offered readers a deeper perspective on the country, blending careful observation with reflective storytelling.

Young journalists who encountered him often spoke of the powerful impression he made. Even brief meetings left lasting memories. Many described his humility and warmth—qualities that made him approachable despite his legendary status in the profession.

During the gathering, members of the club also shared a formal condolence resolution recognizing Sir Mark's lifelong commitment to professional integrity, independent reporting, and freedom of expression. The resolution acknowledged his lasting impact on the global journalistic community and expressed heartfelt sympathy to his family and loved ones.

In a special tribute, the Foreign Correspondents' Club of South Asia announced that the club's auditorium will now be named in his honour. This decision reflects the club's desire to ensure that future generations of journalists remember the values he embodied—accuracy, independence, humility, and a deep respect for truth.

John F. Burns



2 - The FCC hosted on March 28, 2026, a heartfelt memorial gathering to honour the life, work, and legacy of John F. Burns, the legendary New York Times correspondent whose fearless reporting and unwavering commitment to truth made him one of the most respected journalists of his generation.

The event brought together journalists, editors, media professionals, and friends to celebrate not only Burns' remarkable career but also the values he embodied throughout his life: courage, integrity, curiosity, and an uncompromising dedication to factual reporting.

Speakers reflected on Burns' extraordinary contributions to journalism, particularly his reporting from conflict zones across the world, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia, South Asia, and the Middle East. Colleagues remembered him not simply as a reporter but as a witness to history who consistently sought to uncover truths that others could not or would not see.

As journalists shared memories, a common theme emerged: Burns' commitment to field reporting. He believed that journalism required more than observation from a distance. He insisted on being where events were unfolding, speaking directly to people affected by conflict, disaster, and political upheaval.

One former colleague recalled working closely with Burns during his tenure in India. He described Burns as a reporter with an exceptional instinct for identifying the real story hidden behind headlines. During a period of heightened military tensions along the India-Pakistan border, while many correspondents focused solely on the possibility of war, Burns found a unique human angle that transformed a routine assignment into a memorable piece of journalism. Such moments demonstrated his ability to see beyond the obvious and reveal deeper truths about the world around him.

Another anecdote highlighted the determination that defined Burns throughout his career. While covering Afghanistan under Taliban rule, Burns pursued a story that other journalists had abandoned after encountering resistance from local villagers. Undeterred, he returned alone before dawn, reached the village, and obtained a firsthand account that became one of the defining reports of the conflict. His willingness to take calculated risks in pursuit of accurate reporting ultimately contributed to the Pulitzer Prize-winning work for which he became renowned.

His reporting earned him two Pulitzer Prizes—first for his coverage of the Bosnian War in 1993 and later for his reporting from Afghanistan under Taliban rule in 1997. These honours recognized not only his exceptional writing but also his courage in bringing the realities of conflict to audiences around the world.

The FCC has honoured Burns by placing his photograph on its Wall of Fame

Raghu Rai



3 - On May 9, 2026, the FCC hosted a heartfelt memorial gathering to celebrate the extraordinary life and legacy of legendary photographer Raghu Rai. Journalists, photographers, friends, admirers, and members of his family came together to remember not only one of India's greatest visual storytellers but also a compassionate human being whose work and character touched countless lives.

The event began with a special tree-planting ceremony in Raghu Rai's memory, continuing the Club's tradition of honouring distinguished contributors to journalism and society through living memorials. Speakers reflected on how these trees symbolize remembrance, inspiration, and continuity, ensuring that future generations remain connected to the values and achievements of those who shaped the profession. The tree planted in Rai's honour will stand as a lasting tribute to his remarkable contribution to photography and journalism.

Late Raghu Rai had the extraordinary ability to document India's history through his lens. While many journalists record events through words, Rai captured moments that transcended information and became part of the nation's collective memory. His photographs revealed the soul of India—its dreams, tragedies, resilience, spirituality, and humanity. Through his work, audiences around the world witnessed moments of conflict, natural disasters, political transformation, and everyday life, all portrayed with extraordinary empathy and depth.

Several veteran journalists shared personal memories of working with Rai over decades. Friends recalled his warmth, humility, and unmistakable presence. One colleague reflected on their many assignments together, including stories for leading publications and memorable travels across India and South Asia. These recollections painted a picture of a man who was not only a master photographer but also a loyal friend and collaborator whose enthusiasm for storytelling remained undiminished throughout his career.

A particularly moving part of the evening came from Rai's family members, who offered personal insights into the man behind the camera. His son spoke warmly about growing up in a household filled with creativity, where photographers, writers, artists, and journalists regularly gathered to discuss ideas and images. He described his father as a sensitive, affectionate, and deeply caring person whose ability to connect with people enabled him to create some of the most iconic photographs of modern India.

He recalled how spiritual leaders, artists, and public figures responded to Rai not because of his reputation, but because of the genuine respect and humanity he brought to every interaction. This ability to establish trust allowed him to capture intimate and unforgettable moments involving personalities such as Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama, and many others.

Rai's daughter remembered him as a loving father who encouraged his children to remain creative, humble, and true to themselves. Through touching family anecdotes, she illustrated the warmth, humour, and affection that defined his personal life. Reflecting on his work, she observed that although her father was famous for his black-and-white photography, his images were always full of life, emotion, and colour. To her, his photographs reflected the same qualities that defined him as a person.

One of the evening's most memorable reflections focused on Rai's philosophy of connection. Friends described how he approached every subject—whether a prime minister, a spiritual leader, or an ordinary citizen—with the same respect and curiosity. This ability to connect heart-to-heart allowed him to gain unique access and capture moments of rare authenticity. His photographs were not simply records of events; they were expressions of human relationships and shared experience.

The evening concluded with the screening of "Raghu Rai: An Unframed

Portrait,” an internationally acclaimed documentary that explores his life and artistic journey.

Talks by Foreign Envoys



1 - On July 10, 2025, the FCC hosted a talk by His Excellency Mohammed Al-Maliki, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to India, which brought together distinguished diplomats, including ambassadors from Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Sudan, and Bangladesh, senior journalists, and international guests. It was an evening marked by reflection, dialogue, and a deep exploration of diplomacy’s role in building bridges between nations.

The Ambassador of Morocco, widely respected as the Dean of the Arab Diplomatic Corps in India due to his long and impactful tenure, was warmly received as a close friend of India and a leading voice of the Arab world.

Ambassador Al-Maliki began his address by drawing listeners into the long and fascinating historical connections between Morocco and India. He spoke of ancient human links, cultural exchanges, and intellectual journeys that date back centuries. A central figure in this shared past is Ibn Battuta, the legendary

Moroccan traveller and early anthropologist who spent over a decade in India in the 14th century. His detailed accounts, once doubted by historians, are today regarded as masterpieces of anthropology and a living record of Indo-Moroccan civilisational ties.

The Ambassador also recalled symbolic moments of cultural harmony, such as the Moorish Mosque in Kapurthala, inspired by the Koutoubia Mosque of Marrakesh and commissioned by the Maharaja of Kapurthala for the Muslim community of Punjab. These examples, he noted, reflect India's enduring tradition of coexistence and mutual respect.

Turning to modern history, Ambassador Al-Maliki outlined the evolution of formal diplomatic relations, established in 1957, soon after Morocco's independence. While relations remained cordial for decades, they gained renewed momentum following Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit and His Majesty King Mohammed VI's historic visit to India in 2001. A major milestone came in 2015, when India and Morocco elevated their ties to a Strategic Partnership. Since then, cooperation has expanded rapidly across trade, investment, security, and technology. Indian companies operating in Morocco have grown from just 13 in 2015 to over 46 today, spanning sectors such as fertilisers, renewable energy, automotive manufacturing, recycling, and fibre optics. Bilateral trade has more than doubled, reaching peaks of over USD 4 billion, reflecting the growing confidence between the two economies.

The Ambassador explained that his country offers Indian businesses a strategic gateway—not only to Africa but also to Europe and the Arab world—supported by an extensive network of free trade agreements and a stable investment environment.

One of the most compelling pillars of the relationship, Ambassador Al-Maliki emphasised, is people-to-people connection. Indian cinema has enjoyed extraordinary popularity in Morocco for decades, with Hindi films screened in

cinemas and amphitheatres since the 1960s. Many Moroccans, he noted with a smile, speak Hindi and sing Indian songs without ever having visited India—an example of India’s powerful cultural soft power.

The Ambassador also addressed wider global issues, including climate change, renewable energy, and the need for responsible international leadership. Morocco, he noted, has invested in renewable energy for over two decades and now sources more than 40% of its energy mix from renewables, while also exporting clean energy to Europe. He highlighted opportunities for deeper India–Morocco collaboration in Africa, particularly in energy, infrastructure, and development initiatives based on ownership and partnership.



2 - On August 4, 2025, His Excellency Ambassador Kamil, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Arab Republic of Egypt to India and Bhutan, addressed the club. The evening brought together diplomats, journalists, and members for a thoughtful exchange spanning civilisation, foreign policy, trade, geopolitics, and people-to-people ties between India and Egypt.

Ambassador Kamil outlined what he described as the “Egyptian story”—a 7,000-year continuum that shapes Egypt’s national identity and foreign policy. He highlighted four foundational pillars that guide Egypt’s approach to the world: **principles, peace, patience, and partnership.**

Respect for diversity, humanity, equality between men and women, and the sanctity of the nation-state lie at the core of Egyptian principles. Drawing parallels with India, the Ambassador emphasised that both countries exemplify the idea of a nation-state—diverse yet unified.

Peace, he noted, is embedded in Egypt's diplomatic DNA, recalling the world's first recorded peace treaty signed by Pharaoh Ramses II in 1259 BCE. Patience, forged over millennia, was illustrated through Egypt's long journey to unveil the full Tutankhamun collection—more than a century after its discovery. Finally, partnership was underscored as Egypt's enduring belief that cooperation, not conflict, is the only sustainable path forward.

In the course of his address, a short film on the **Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM)** was screened, leaving the audience visibly moved. More than a museum, the GEM was described as a message—an Egyptian gift to humanity, symbolising inclusivity, cultural dialogue, and continuity between past, present, and future.

Turning to bilateral ties, the Ambassador traced India–Egypt relations back not merely to the 20th century, but over **4,500 years**, citing ancient trade links during the reign of Pharaoh Sahure and the presence of Indian spices in Egyptian mummification practices. The two countries have signed a **Strategic Partnership Agreement, which** marked a turning point, with high-level visits on both sides and an ambitious roadmap for cooperation. With India assuming the BRICS chairmanship in 2026, both countries see expanded opportunities for collaboration, the Ambassador said.



3 - His Excellency Ambassador Mariano Agustín Coucino, former Indian Ambassador of India to Argentina, Dr. Amarendra Khatua, who also had the concurrent accreditation to Uruguay and Paraguay, and Costa Rica, addressed the FCC on February 23, 2026, on diplomatic cooperation, economic ties, global governance, and the future of India–Latin America relations.

Ambassador Coucino reflected on the longstanding diplomatic ties between India and Argentina that began soon after India's independence in 1947. Over the decades, the relationship has matured and deepened, particularly in the past six years, when the two countries elevated their ties to a strategic partnership.

Today, India is among Argentina's top trading partners, with bilateral trade reaching approximately \$5.5 billion. Argentina plays a crucial role in India's food security as one of the leading suppliers of edible oils, particularly soybean and sunflower oil. At the same time, both countries enjoy strong economic complementarity.

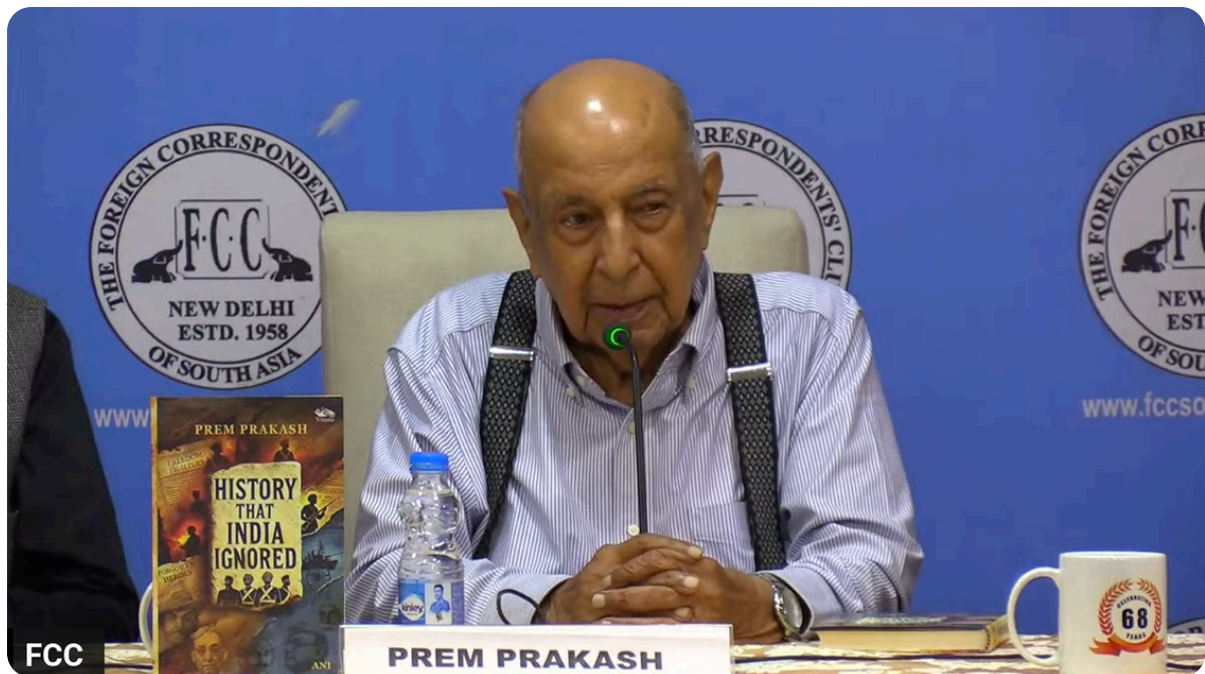
Ambassador Coucino emphasised that cooperation is expanding into emerging sectors such as mining, especially lithium, a critical mineral required for electric vehicle batteries and clean energy technologies.

Ambassador Khatua pointed out that Argentina forms part of the so-called “Lithium Triangle,” along with Chile and Bolivia, which holds some of the world’s largest lithium reserves. With India rapidly developing its electric mobility ecosystem, collaboration in this sector presents enormous opportunities. Several Indian companies are already exploring investment opportunities in Argentine provinces rich in lithium resources, supported by new investment policies introduced by the Argentine government.

Beyond trade and minerals, the two countries have also collaborated in areas such as nuclear technology, space research, agriculture, and biotechnology. Argentina has previously contributed to the development of nuclear facilities in India for peaceful purposes, including medical applications. There is significant potential for further collaboration between institutions such as India’s space agency and Argentine research organisations.

The discussion concluded on a positive note, with both the speakers highlighting the strong potential for future collaboration.

Book-Releases and Discussions



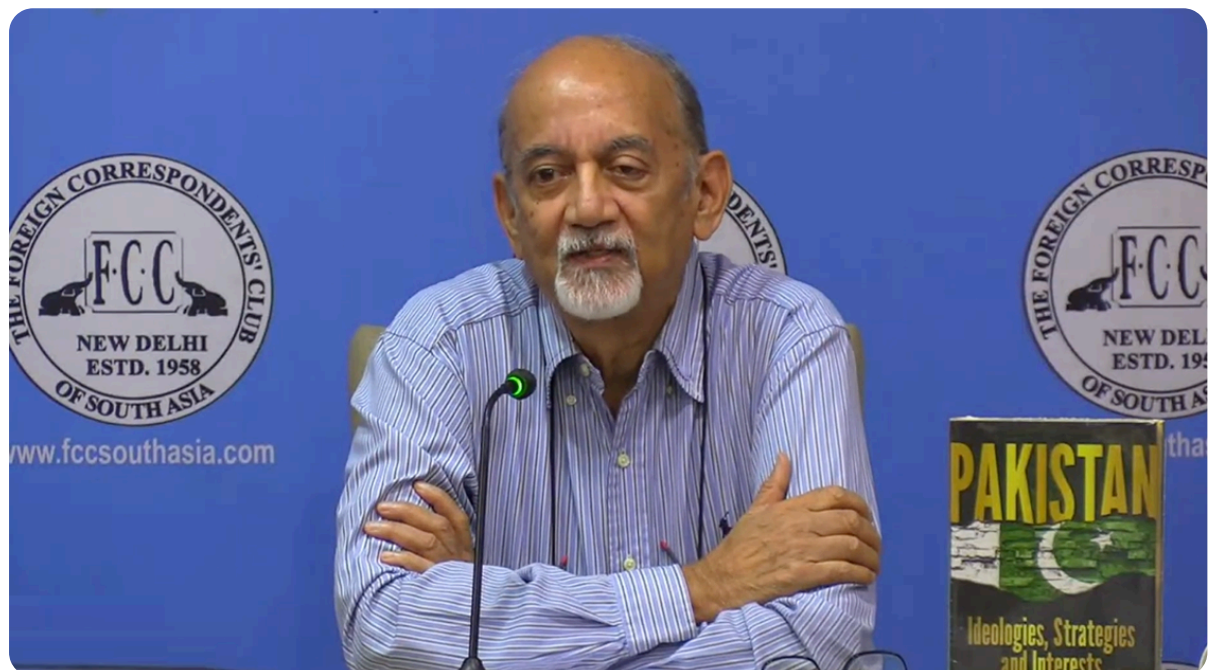
1 - On August 4, 2025, the FCC hosted a deeply engaging and intellectually rich evening centred on history, journalism, and the forgotten narratives of India's freedom struggle. The event brought together distinguished voices from media, public policy, and scholarship to discuss the latest book by veteran journalist and media pioneer Mr. Prem Prakash, titled A History That India Ignored.

Mr. Prem Prakash spoke candidly about what compelled him to write the book. He observed that if one were to ask how India attained independence, most people would name only Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress. While acknowledging their role, he argued that this narrative is incomplete. Drawing on historical records and the words of British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, Mr. Prakash highlighted the decisive impact of revolutionary movements, particularly the Indian National Army (INA), naval mutinies, and the growing fear within the British establishment of a widespread military uprising.

He spoke movingly about figures such as Bhagat Singh, Raj Bihari Bose, and countless others—men and women who faced imprisonment, execution, or death rather than submit to colonial rule. Many, he noted, chose poison over arrest. These stories, largely absent from mainstream historiography, form the

emotional and moral core of the book. The title, he explained, is a tribute to these unsung heroes whose sacrifices made independence possible.

The evening also featured heartfelt tributes from senior media professionals who recalled the early days of television journalism in India. Mr. Prem Prakash was described as the “root” of visual journalism in the country—someone without whom institutions like Doordarshan and later private broadcasters may not have evolved in the way they did. There was a strong sentiment that his contributions deserve the highest national recognition.



2 - On August 21, 2025, the FCC saw a deeply engaging and intellectually rich discussion around the book *Pakistan: Ideologies, Strategies and Interests* by Ambassador Dinkar Srivastava. The event brought together senior diplomats, scholars, journalists, and members of the Club to reflect on the historical, ideological, and strategic foundations of Pakistan and their continuing impact on South Asia.

The discussion was moderated by Ambassador Sharath Sabharwal, former High Commissioner of India to Pakistan and author of India's *Pakistan Conundrum*. In his opening remarks, Ambassador Sabharwal set the historical context by recalling the trauma of the 1947 Partition, which displaced nearly 20

million people and claimed over half a million lives. While many had initially hoped that India and Pakistan would eventually settle into a peaceful coexistence, history unfolded very differently. From its earliest days, he observed, Pakistan emerged as a state troubled internally and troublesome for the region—marked by repeated military interventions, hostility toward India, and an enduring reliance on ideology as a source of legitimacy.

Ambassador Sabharwal identified several structural factors that have shaped Pakistan's trajectory: a persistent civil–military imbalance, the state's encouragement of religious extremism, chronic economic dependence on external powers, and deep ethnic and sectarian fault lines. At the core of these issues, he argued, lies Pakistan's tendency to define itself in opposition to India rather than through a positive, inclusive national identity.

Introducing the book, Ambassador Dinkar Srivastava clarified that his work is neither a conventional history of Partition nor a study of bilateral relations. Instead, it examines the “ideology of Pakistan” and its interaction with military strategy and state interests. While governments and constitutions have changed—three military coups and three constitutions since 1947—the centrality of ideology has remained constant and, in many ways, intensified.

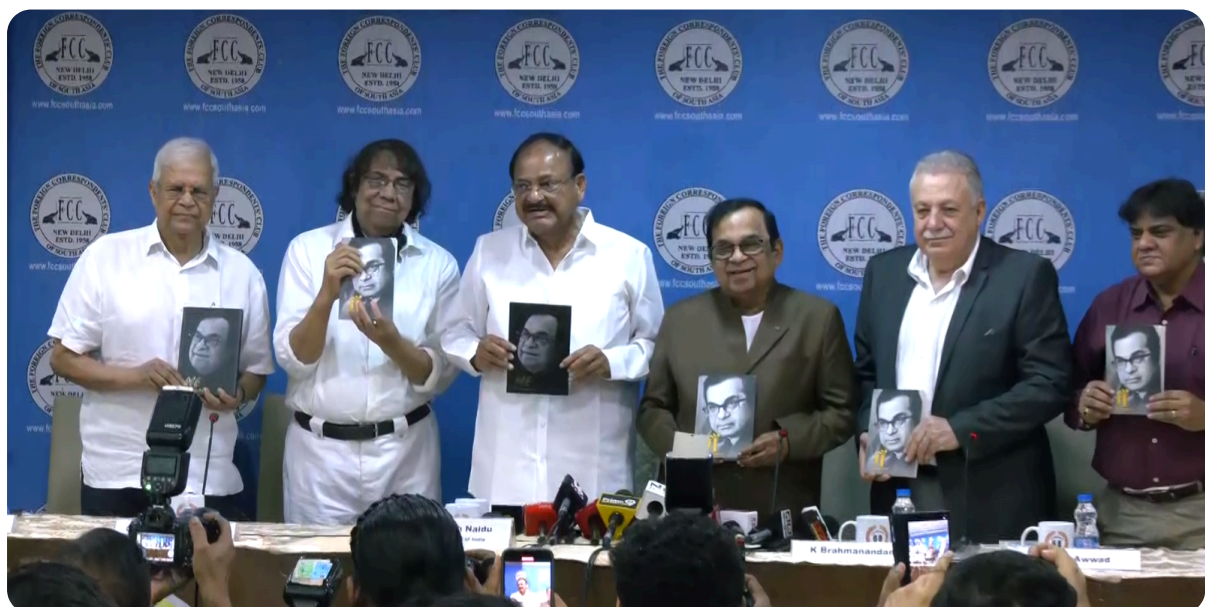
Ambassador Srivastava explained that Pakistan's ideology is not formally defined in its constitution, yet it has been repeatedly invoked by courts, political leaders, and the military establishment. He described it as a blend of historical memory, religious identity, and political expediency. Drawing on original Pakistani sources, he traced its intellectual roots to figures such as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and Maulana Maududi, while also highlighting the voices of nationalist Muslims who opposed Partition and argued for a united India.

One of the book's key arguments is that Pakistan's ideology has systematically denied linguistic diversity, democratic principles, and pluralism. Ambassador

Srivastava illustrated this with examples ranging from the imposition of Urdu as the sole national language—despite being spoken by a small minority—to the marginalization of ethnic identities in East Pakistan, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These ideological choices, he argued, directly contributed to the secession of Bangladesh in 1971 and continue to fuel internal instability.

A significant portion of the discussion focused on the role of the Pakistan Army, which has positioned itself not only as the guardian of national borders but also as the custodian of ideology. Ambassador Srivastava examined how religious narratives have been woven into military doctrine, including the use of jihadist proxies and the concept of “strategic depth” in Afghanistan. He argued that these policies cannot be fully explained by conventional security interests alone, but are deeply rooted in ideological thinking.

The conversation also addressed Pakistan’s nuclear posture, which, unlike Cold War-era deterrence models, explicitly links nuclear weapons to territorial disputes such as Kashmir. This fusion of ideology, terrorism, and nuclear signalling, the author warned, has dangerously lowered thresholds of escalation in South Asia.



3 - On September 12, 2025, the FCC hosted a truly memorable evening that brought together cinema, culture, journalism, and public life under

one roof. The occasion was the national release of the English and Hindi editions of the autobiography of legendary comedian Dr. Brahmanandam, presided over by the Honourable former Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, and attended by an array of distinguished guests, journalists, artists, and members of the FCC fraternity.

Dr. Brahmanandam's autobiography, originally written in Telugu, is now available in **six languages**, including English and Hindi. This makes it the **first multilingual memoir by an Indian screen comedian**, underscoring both the pan-Indian appeal of the artist and the cultural reach of Indian cinema beyond linguistic boundaries.

Dr. Brahmanandam, a **Padma Shri awardee**, holds a **Guinness World Record for appearing in over 1,200 films** across Telugu and other Indian languages. With a career spanning more than four decades, multiple Filmfare Awards, and recent recognition as a Global Comedian in Dubai, he is widely regarded as one of the finest comedians in the history of Indian cinema. His unique distinction in the digital age — being one of the most widely used faces in memes — only adds to his cross-generational appeal.

In his address, Shri Venkaiah Naidu spoke with affection and admiration for Dr. Brahmanandam, describing him as an artist who has consistently brought joy without resorting to vulgarity, obscenity, or sensationalism. In an era where such elements are often considered shortcuts to popularity, Shri Naidu praised Dr. Brahmanandam for maintaining dignity, decency, and universal appeal — qualities that have made him a household name.

Reflecting on the autobiography, Shri Naidu noted its cultural significance and its message of unity in diversity. He spoke passionately about language, emphasizing respect for one's mother tongue while also acknowledging the importance of Hindi in reaching a national audience and English for global engagement. In a personal anecdote, he recalled his own early resistance to

Hindi and how life eventually taught him the value of linguistic openness — a lesson he believes is vital in a diverse country like India.

Addressing the journalists present, Shri Naidu offered a memorable reminder: *“Information with confirmation is more powerful than ammunition.”* He urged the media to stay close to truth, resist sensationalism, and play a constructive role in communicating India’s story to the world. He also encouraged the FCC to continue inviting Indian leaders to engage with foreign correspondents and counter misconceptions about India’s growth, democracy, and global role.

In his address, Dr. Brahmanandam shared that the motivation behind writing his autobiography was not fame, but inspiration. Born into extreme poverty, raised by a schoolteacher father, and having worked as a lecturer before entering films, he described his life as a testament to perseverance, faith, and hard work. The book, he explained, focuses less on cinema and more on struggle — meant to encourage young readers to believe that background need not limit destiny.



4 - On October 30, 2025, the FCC hosted a memorable and deeply reflective evening centred on leadership, integrity, and nation-building, with a discussion on *The Great Conciliator*, the acclaimed book on India’s second Prime Minister,

Lal Bahadur Shastri, authored by Dr. Sanjeev Chopra.

A former IAS officer of the West Bengal cadre, Dr. Chopra has served in several pivotal roles, which included the position of Director of the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration.

Dr. Chopra spoke with warmth, humour, and deep personal insight. He reflected on why he chose to write about Lal Bahadur Shastri, noting that even at the Academy named after him, there was a surprising lack of comprehensive scholarship on Shastri's life. This gap, he said, compelled him to explore not just Shastri the Prime Minister, but Shastri the person — shaped by Mughal Sarai, Banaras, Lahore, the freedom movement, prison life, and decades of organisational work within the Congress.

Dr. Chopra shared memorable anecdotes that revealed Shastri's understated leadership style: his belief that leadership is "height-agnostic," his ability to listen patiently before building consensus, and his quiet sense of humour that disarmed opponents without confrontation. He spoke movingly of Shastri's moral courage, simplicity, and integrity — qualities that made him a leader people trusted instinctively, whether soldiers on the frontlines or farmers facing food shortages.

A particularly poignant moment came when Mr. Balesh Kumar, grandson of Lal Bahadur Shastri, addressed the gathering. He spoke about the book's value even to Shastri's own family, revealing unknown aspects of his grandfather's life. He reminded the audience that Shastri died with no personal wealth, leaving behind a small bank loan that his widow repaid from her family pension — a powerful testament to a life of integrity rarely seen in public office.

The discussion also touched upon Shastri's role as a peacemaker, his commitment to non-violence shaped by the freedom struggle, and his pragmatic approach to governance and foreign policy. Dr. Chopra noted that

Shastri was neither ideological nor doctrinaire; instead, he focused on practical solutions, institution-building, and consensus — qualities that remain deeply relevant today.



5 - On November 27, 2025, the FCC hosted an engaging and thought-provoking discussion on the book, *The Silent Enemy: Non-Traditional Challenges to National Security*, co-authored by Ambassador Dr. Arvind Gupta and senior journalist Rajesh Singh. The event brought together diplomats, journalists, policy thinkers, and members for an evening that went well beyond a conventional book launch, evolving instead into a wide-ranging conversation on how national security itself must be reimagined in today's interconnected world.

Mr. Rajesh Singh's long career in journalism and authorship, as well as Ambassador Gupta's distinguished service as a career diplomat, former Deputy National Security Advisor, and Director of leading strategic institutions, lent the book both analytical depth and practical relevance.

Ambassador Gupta explained that the idea of broadening the concept of national security is not new. During his early years at the National Security Council Secretariat, the emphasis was already shifting from purely military threats to a more holistic understanding that included energy, food, water, health, and internal stability. Over time, these discussions gained urgency as global events — from terrorism and pandemics to climate shocks and supply-chain disruptions — demonstrated how indirect, non-military factors could

severely constrain a nation's ability to act.

The book identifies fifteen such non-traditional challenges, not as isolated issues but as deeply interconnected forces. Climate change, for instance, is not merely an environmental concern; it alters geography, erodes coastlines, affects military infrastructure, and threatens food and water security. Energy security is no longer just about access to resources but about diplomacy, sanctions, technology, and vulnerability to economic weaponisation.

Mr. Rajesh Singh expanded on these linkages with concrete examples. Melting glaciers threaten the future of perennial rivers, which in turn impacts agriculture, health, and social stability. Food shortages have historically triggered unrest, from the French Revolution to more recent crises in Haiti and Mexico, and similar patterns can be seen closer to home. These cascading effects underline the book's core argument: non-traditional challenges are not peripheral to national security — they are central to it.

A significant portion of the discussion focused on narratives and information warfare. Speakers emphasized that while narratives have always existed, today's unregulated digital ecosystem has amplified their speed, reach, and impact. Social media platforms, often controlled by powerful private entities, now shape public discourse faster than governments or traditional media can respond. In this environment, selective amplification of negative stories, often sourced from within open societies themselves, can distort perceptions and weaken morale.

At the same time, the speakers cautioned against shutting down debate. India's openness, pluralism, and culture of argument remain strengths. The challenge lies in developing discernment — the ability to distinguish between healthy internal criticism and externally amplified narratives designed to undermine confidence. Several speakers observed that India has many positive stories to tell, from technological innovation to climate initiatives, but lacks a coordinated

ecosystem to project them globally.

The conversation also explored the role of soft power and civilisational values. Rather than seeing culture as separate from security, the speakers argued that understanding a nation's civilisational psychology is essential to reading its strategic behaviour. Concepts such as “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” — the idea of the world as one family — were discussed as alternative narratives to divisive worldviews. These ideas, far from being abstract, shape diplomacy, partnerships, and global engagement, particularly with the Global South.

Ambassador Gupta highlighted India's growing outreach to the Global South through initiatives in renewable energy, health, and development cooperation. In a world where traditional power hierarchies are under strain, partnerships based on shared interests, rather than rigid alliances, are becoming increasingly important. Self-reliance, or Swaraj, combined with global engagement, was identified as a pragmatic path forward.



6 - On January 8, 2026, the FCC invited Mr. Salman Khurshid—former External Affairs Minister, senior advocate, parliamentarian, and one of India's most experienced voices on diplomacy and international affairs, to discuss his co-authored book India's Tryst with the World: Rethinking India Series.

Mr. Khurshid began by thanking members for attending despite a crowded calendar of events in the city, underlining that public engagement on foreign policy remains vital—especially at a moment of global turbulence. At the heart of his remarks was the idea that Indian foreign policy has historically been rooted in continuity and national consensus. From Independence onward, he argued, India largely spoke with one voice on the world stage, even when governments changed. Differences existed, but they were muted and managed within a broadly shared framework that emphasised strategic autonomy, non-alignment, and moral credibility.

He recalled India's unique positioning during the Cold War: a special relationship with the Soviet Union, moments of convergence with the United States based on democratic values, and leadership within the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). This approach, he said, earned India respect across the Global South and from both Cold War blocs. India may not always have sat at the "highest table," but it exercised real leadership and was widely understood—its red lines were clear, and its positions predictable.

Mr. Khurshid pointed to landmark breakthroughs during Congress-led governments, including Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's outreach to China, the economic reforms initiated under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, and the 123 Civil Nuclear Agreement with the United States. These, he noted, were transformational moments that reshaped India's global standing.

Turning to the present, Mr. Khurshid cautioned against narratives that suggest India's foreign policy began anew in 2014. While acknowledging the right of any elected government to frame its own policies and claim successes, he questioned the assertion that "nothing was right before" and "everything is right now." The more important question, he argued, is whether India today knows clearly where it stands—and whether the world knows it too.

He raised a series of pointed questions: Where does India stand with China after a decade of tensions and disengagement? What have we gained or lost economically, strategically, and territorially? Where do we stand with the United States, amid tariffs, pressure over Russian oil, and an increasingly transactional global order? And how does India balance its close ties with Israel with its longstanding moral and political commitment to Palestine?

On “Operation Sindoor” against Pakistan, Mr. Khurshid stressed that while the bravery and professionalism of India’s armed forces are beyond question, a democracy owes its citizens clarity. Who stood by India during the crisis? Which countries offered unequivocal support?

A recurring theme throughout the discussion was strategic autonomy. Mr. Khurshid agreed that autonomy remains essential, regardless of whether it is framed as non-alignment, multi-alignment, or otherwise. But, he expressed concern that today’s foreign policy appears increasingly transactional, driven by short-term deals rather than long-term vision. In this context, he warned against “multi-alignment” becoming a state of being aligned with no one and attracting no one. In a genuinely multipolar world, he argued, India should aspire not merely to move between poles, but to become a pole in its own right—one that others are drawn toward.

Equally important, he said, is morality. Indian foreign policy, from Mahatma Gandhi onward, combined pragmatism with values. While realism is unavoidable, a complete absence of moral purpose hollows out diplomacy. Principles such as non-interference, respect for international law, and the courage to speak truth even to friends, must remain central.



7 - On February 11, 2026 , the FCC hosted a fascinating and highly engaging session featuring renowned sports journalist, author, and actor Mr. Ayaz Memon Nair (often referred to as Mr. Nair), who spoke about his book “Whispers of the Indian Test Cap.” The evening brought together cricket enthusiasts, journalists, and members of our community for an insightful discussion about the history, spirit, and global journey of cricket.

Mr. Nair is not only an accomplished sports journalist but also an author, occasional film actor, and a passionate promoter of cricket worldwide. Having spent decades reporting on international cricket and covering multiple World Cups, he has played an important role in documenting the sport’s legacy and bringing lesser-known stories of cricket to the public.

Test cricket is usually regarded as the purest form of the game. While shorter formats such as T20 and One-Day Internationals have grown immensely popular, Test cricket continues to hold a special place for purists who value the strategy, endurance, and technical brilliance that the format demands. Mr. Nair’s book focuses on this heritage, exploring the stories behind the cricketers who earned the prestigious Indian Test cap.

During his talk, Mr. Nair explained that the book is not about batting techniques or bowling strategies but rather about the human stories behind India’s Test

cricketers. According to him, every Test cap represents years of determination, perseverance, and passion for the game. Through extensive research and interviews, he discovered numerous fascinating anecdotes about players whose journeys to the national team were filled with struggles and inspiring moments.

One of the most interesting aspects of the book is the exploration of cricket's early history in India. Mr. Nair spoke about some of the country's pioneering cricketers, including Amar Singh, one of the first Indian Test players. He recounted how during his research he tracked down Amar Singh's family in Rajkot and visited the house named "Amar Villa," where he learned several personal stories about the legendary fast bowler. Such discoveries helped bring forgotten chapters of cricket history back to life.

The author also shared how many myths and assumptions about Indian cricket were challenged through his research. For instance, the common belief that Indian batsmen once struggled against fast bowling was contradicted by historical records of players who performed exceptionally well against world-class pace attacks. Through examples from early tours and memorable matches, he illustrated how Indian cricketers had always possessed the courage and skill to compete at the highest level.

During the interactive question-and-answer session, members discussed the future of Test cricket in an era dominated by T20 leagues and commercial tournaments. Mr. Nair acknowledged the massive popularity and financial success of leagues such as the IPL but emphasized that Test cricket remains the ultimate challenge for any cricketer. While shorter formats bring excitement and entertainment, the five-day format continues to test a player's technique, patience, and mental strength.

The discussion also touched upon the growing role of women in cricket. Responding to a question from the audience, Mr. Nair praised the rapid

progress of women's cricket in India and globally. He noted that with increasing opportunities, leagues, and international competitions, women cricketers are building their own legacy and inspiring a new generation of players.

Another important theme that emerged during the session was the democratisation of cricket in India. In the past, the sport was often associated with elite backgrounds, but today players come from every corner of the country and from diverse economic and social backgrounds. Mr. Nair highlighted examples of players who rose from modest beginnings—sons of groundsmen, drivers, and workers—yet went on to represent India at the highest level. According to him, this transformation reflects the growing accessibility and popularity of the sport across the nation.

The global expansion of cricket was another highlight of the conversation. The audience learned how the game is now being played in countries that once had little connection to it, from Japan to Afghanistan and Nepal. Mr. Nair shared inspiring stories about how cricket kits were distributed in remote regions and how communities adopted the game with enthusiasm. Today, cricket is watched by billions worldwide and continues to grow rapidly beyond its traditional strongholds.

Global Headlines



1 - Save Democracy in Bangladesh The FCC brought together on January 23, 2026, policymakers, legal scholars, human rights defenders, journalists, and cultural voices from across the world to examine Bangladesh's rapidly evolving political situation following August 2024. Held in a hybrid format with panellists joining live from different global locations, the event aimed to provide an international perspective on Bangladesh's democratic trajectory, constitutional order, and regional implications in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific.

Several speakers described the post-August 2024 period as a turning point. According to them, the collapse of the elected government and the installation of an interim administration raised serious constitutional questions. They stressed that the legitimacy of governance, the dissolution of parliament, and the process leading to the interim authority remain deeply contested.

Dr. Mastilla, speaking from France, framed the situation through a legal and constitutional lens. He described the current phase as an example of "autocratic legalism" and "abusive constitutionalism," where laws and ordinances are used to undermine the rule of law rather than protect it. He highlighted concerns over the extensive use of presidential ordinances, restructuring of the judiciary, and the proposed "July Charter," a set of wide-ranging reforms intended to be approved through a single referendum alongside national elections.

Human rights violations emerged as a central theme throughout the conference. Professor Amir Bin Minar presented extensive data documenting what he described as a collapse of law and order. According to figures shared during the session, Bangladesh has witnessed widespread mob violence, extrajudicial killings, mass arrests, and custodial deaths since August 2024.

Speakers reported systematic targeting of political opposition members, journalists, academics, and professionals. Minority communities—particularly religious and ethnic minorities—were described as facing heightened persecution, including attacks on places of worship, cultural institutions, and community leaders. Violence against women and gender-based crimes were also highlighted, with thousands of reported cases reflecting a climate of fear and impunity.

Journalistic freedom was another major concern. Panellists cited attacks on media houses, arrests of journalists under allegedly fabricated charges, and the withdrawal of press accreditations as signs of increasing suppression of free expression.

Former ministers and political leaders on the panel emphasized the contrast between Bangladesh's economic trajectory before August 2024 and the current situation. They pointed to years of steady GDP growth, poverty reduction, expansion of healthcare and electricity access, and women's empowerment under previous administrations.

According to the speakers, the ongoing instability has resulted in economic decline, job losses—particularly among women in industrial sectors—and rising poverty. They argued that insecurity and political uncertainty have undermined investor confidence and disrupted everyday life for millions of citizens.

Cultural activist and actress Rukia Hashim focused on the impact of the crisis

on women's rights and cultural freedom. She described shrinking space for women in public life, attacks on cultural events, and increased threats against female artists, journalists, and activists. The destruction of cultural institutions, museums, and historical memorials was described as an attempt at ideological erasure rather than isolated acts of vandalism.

She noted that women's political representation has also declined sharply, with many parties fielding few or no women candidates. Panelists warned that these developments threaten decades of progress in gender equality and cultural pluralism.

Across the panel, there was a consistent appeal to the international community, including neighbouring countries and global democratic institutions. Speakers urged international actors to closely monitor developments, support inclusive democratic processes, and advocate for the restoration of rule of law and human rights in Bangladesh.



2 - India-USA Trade Deal

On February 6 , 2026, the FCC hosted a thought-provoking discussion on the India- USA Trade Deal, prominent Speakers being Rabinder Sachdev, author and US-based expert on geopolitics and American Culture, and Surajit Mazumdar, Professor of Economics, JNU.

The Indo-US relations were seen in a global context, particularly relating to trade policies, energy security, tariffs, global supply chains, and the shifting dynamics among major global powers.

Energy security, particularly India's oil imports, formed a significant part of the discussion. Members raised questions about the growing pressure from the United States—especially under the leadership of former U.S. President Donald Trump—to reduce or stop the purchase of Russian oil. The speakers emphasized that such decisions are often driven by economic considerations rather than purely political motivations. For instance, the potential economic cost of straining relations with major trading partners could outweigh the short-term savings from discounted oil imports.

Another key theme marking the discussions was the role of tariffs and non-tariff barriers in global trade. While tariffs are often the most visible trade restrictions, the speakers pointed out that non-tariff barriers—such as regulatory standards, quality certifications, and sanitary requirements—can be equally influential in shaping trade flows. Countries often maintain strict standards for imported products, particularly in sectors like agriculture and food exports. These measures are not necessarily targeted at specific countries but are part of broader regulatory frameworks designed to ensure quality and safety.

The pharmaceutical sector was another area of significant interest. India has long been recognized as a global leader in the production of generic medicines. This success was historically linked to the country's patent laws, which allowed domestic manufacturers to build strong capabilities in producing affordable generic drugs. Although India amended its patent laws in 2005 to align with international agreements, the generics industry continues to play a crucial role in both domestic healthcare and global pharmaceutical supply chains.

Participants also discussed the broader concept of the “weaponization of

trade,” where economic tools such as tariffs, sanctions, and trade restrictions are increasingly used to achieve political objectives. In this environment, trade policies are no longer driven solely by economic considerations but are also shaped by strategic and geopolitical interests. According to the speakers, this reflects a larger shift toward a more competitive and uncertain global order, where nations must carefully balance cooperation and self-interest.



3 - Crisis in West Asia

On March 9, 2026, an engaging and insightful discussion on the evolving geopolitical situation in West Asia (Middle East) and its global implications was organised by the FCC. The session featured detailed perspectives from principal Speakers -Gaddam, former Indian Ambassador to Iran and Mahesh Sachdeva, former Indian Ambassador and President, Economic Diplomacy and Strategies.

One of the key themes discussed was the internal structure of power within Iran. Speakers noted that within the Shia- world there are traditionally two major religious centers: Mashhad in Iran and Najaf in Iraq. Historically, clerics in Najaf have largely avoided direct political involvement, maintaining that religious authority should remain separate from governance. In contrast, Iranian clerical institutions—particularly those associated with Qom and the political establishment in Tehran—have supported a more direct role in governance under the doctrine of “Velayat-e-Faqih,” or the rule of the Islamic jurist. This

concept grants the Supreme Leader of Iran significant authority above elected officials.

The discussion also addressed the broader military dimension of the conflict. While Iran retains the capacity to inflict damage through missile strikes and other asymmetric capabilities, speakers emphasized that prolonged confrontation with the combined military power of the United States and Israel presents significant challenges.

Speakers noted that the fragmentation of Iran could create serious regional consequences. A scenario in which Iran breaks apart along ethnic or political lines could resemble situations seen in countries such as Libya or Lebanon, resulting in prolonged instability and competing factions. Such an outcome would pose significant risks not only for Iran but for the entire Gulf region, which itself contains diverse ethnic groups and tribal structures. As a result, most neighbouring countries are believed to favour diplomatic solutions that maintain regional stability.

Speakers also explored how global energy markets and economic factors could influence the broader geopolitical landscape. Rising oil prices, disruptions in Gulf markets, and the reorientation of energy supply chains could create new opportunities for certain countries, including Russia. Meanwhile, Europe's energy security and China's reliance on external energy sources may further complicate the international response to the crisis.

From India's perspective, the discussion emphasized the importance of maintaining a balanced and pragmatic approach. India has longstanding relationships with multiple stakeholders in the region and must carefully safeguard its strategic, economic, and energy interests. Recent diplomatic engagements between Indian and Iranian officials highlight India's effort to maintain open channels of communication while advocating stability and dialogue.

Special Events



1 - Need for AI Models

On Aug 22, 2025, FCC hosted an engaging and thought-provoking session focused on Artificial Intelligence and its growing impact on journalism and media, bringing together senior journalists, media professionals, and AI experts. The discussion reflected both the excitement and the concerns surrounding AI, especially at a time when newsrooms across the world are adapting to rapid technological change.

The session opened with a candid reflection on why such conversations are necessary. While technology has advanced rapidly, many senior journalists are still in a learning phase when it comes to AI. The core question posed was simple yet profound: **Should artificial intelligence be viewed as a fundamental part of journalism, or as an empowering tool that supports journalistic work?** The consensus was clear—AI is not a replacement for

journalists, but a tool that can significantly enhance productivity and capability when used responsibly.

Our speakers highlighted how AI has already entered everyday media workflows. From writing marketing copy and website content to summarising reports, generating audio-visual material, podcasts, and even music, AI's creative capabilities are expanding rapidly. New developments such as **AI agents**—systems that can search, analyse information, book tasks, and prepare detailed research reports—are moving AI from a passive tool to an active assistant.

A striking example shared during the session was how AI can read hundreds of pages of complex documents or PDFs and convert them into concise, understandable summaries. For journalists dealing with long policy papers, court documents, or research reports, this capability alone can save days of effort. However, speakers repeatedly stressed that **speed must never come at the cost of accuracy**.

India emerged as a central theme throughout the discussion. Today, India ranks among the world's leading adopters of generative AI. With the largest number of users on platforms like ChatGPT and increasing affordability of AI tools, India has become a key market for global AI companies. At the same time, experts emphasized that India may not always lead in inventing new AI technologies, but it excels as a **"diffusion leader"**—a society capable of quickly absorbing and adopting new technologies at scale, much like it did with UPI.

This led to a deeper conversation about building **sovereign AI models for India**. Given geopolitical uncertainties and the risk of restricted access to global technologies, there is a growing need for AI systems that are built in India, for Indian languages, cultures, and use cases. Initiatives such as BharatGen (IIT Bombay) and AI for Bharat (IIT Madras) are already working towards this goal, particularly in areas like Indian languages, dialects, agriculture, and traditional

knowledge.

A major concern discussed at length was **AI hallucination**—the tendency of generative AI models to confidently produce incorrect or fabricated information when they lack reliable data. For journalism, this poses serious risks. Examples were shared where AI-generated or AI-assisted news headlines were replicated across multiple outlets, spreading inaccuracies at scale. This reinforces the need for journalists to remain vigilant, cross-verify facts, and rely on domain expertise rather than blindly trusting AI outputs.

The session also explored ethical and legal challenges, including copyright, intellectual property, and privacy. Ongoing legal cases related to the use of copyrighted news content in AI training highlight also the need for clearer regulations.

Speakers agreed that while innovation must continue, **guard-rails are essential** to ensure trust, transparency, and accountability.

Another key takeaway was the changing nature of journalistic work. AI can dramatically improve efficiency in research, data analysis, translation, and content formatting. However, **human judgment, contextual understanding, investigative skills, and ethical decision-making remain irreplaceable**. As one speaker noted, AI can generate content, but it cannot replicate lived experience, ground reporting, or nuanced understanding of local realities.

Looking ahead, speakers predicted that within the next decade, AI will become as ubiquitous as the internet. While today's hype may exceed real-world usage, the trajectory is clear. Journalists and media organizations that invest time in understanding AI now will be better positioned to use it ethically, creatively, and strategically.



2- The “Olten Qalam” Award Ceremony

The Foreign Correspondent Club of South Asia (FCCSA) hosted on September 18, 2025 a meaningful and intellectually engaging evening with the Embassy of Uzbekistan, centred around the prestigious Golden Pencil (Olten Kalam) Award Ceremony—a recognition that celebrates excellence in journalism and the power of the written word in strengthening international understanding.

Representing the Embassy was **Mr. Rustam Mamadov, Defence Attaché**, whose presence and address underscored the importance Uzbekistan places on media engagement and people-to-people ties. Instituted by the Union of Journalists of Uzbekistan, the award is presented annually to journalists from Uzbekistan and abroad whose work meaningfully captures the country’s culture, economy, and transformation. She emphasized that Uzbekistan is one of the few countries that consistently honours journalists and intellectual contributions across borders, and thanked FCCSA for its collaboration in hosting the ceremony.

In his keynote address, **Mr. Rustam Mamadov** spoke eloquently about the importance of the Olten Kalam Award, now in its 13th year. In 2025 alone, the competition received over **7,000 submissions from more than 500 journalists**, underscoring its prestige and reach. He expressed particular appreciation for the growing participation of Indian journalists, whose analytical reporting on Uzbekistan’s reforms and its strategic partnership with India has

contributed significantly to mutual understanding between the two nations.

The highlight of the evening was the felicitation of **Ms. Yeshe Seli**, Consulting Editor at Business India, who received the Golden Pencil Award in the category of **Best Material by a Foreign Journalist**. Mr. Mamadov congratulated Ms. Seli for her insightful reporting, noting that her work exemplifies journalism's role not only in reporting facts, but in building enduring international relationships.

Ms. Seli, in her acceptance remarks, shared her journey of covering Uzbekistan over the past two years. She reflected on discovering the depth of India–Uzbekistan ties—from historical connections along the Silk Route to contemporary cooperation in trade, education, healthcare, and investment. She highlighted the presence of Indian companies, universities, and students in Uzbekistan, and described the warmth and hospitality she experienced while reporting from the country, including during the Tashkent Investment Forum and Uzbekistan's recent elections. She encouraged fellow journalists to explore Uzbekistan both as a reporting destination and as a country rich in history, culture, and opportunity.



3 - National Seminar on Water, Gender & Climate

On March 17, 2026, Igniting Minds Organization, in association with the Foreign Correspondents' Club of South Asia, organised a seminar on "Water, Gender & Climate" . The theme was : "Where Water Flows, Equality Grows."

In his welcome address, Mr. Karnakar G., Founder of Igniting Minds Organization, shared his deeply personal journey from a water-scarce village in Mahabubnagar. Reflecting on his childhood experiences of walking long distances with his mother and sister to collect water, he emphasized how water scarcity disproportionately affects women and girls, often limiting educational and economic opportunities. Over the past two decades, his organization has worked across thousands of communities, helping provide access to safe and affordable drinking water for millions of people. He stressed that water security is not only an environmental issue but also a matter of social justice and gender equality.

The seminar was honored by the presence of Dr. Raj Bhushan Choudhary, Hon'ble Minister of State for Jal Shakti, Government of India, who delivered the keynote inaugural address. He highlighted India's transformative journey in water governance under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. Speaking about the success of the Jal Jeevan Mission,

Speaking about the success of the Jal Jeevan Mission, groundwater management initiatives, and efficient irrigation practices, the minister emphasized that water conservation, management, and security are central to India's vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047. He also underlined the importance of sustainable groundwater management and the principle of "Per Drop More Crop" in ensuring long-term water security.

A major highlight of the seminar was the keynote address by Dr. V.K. Saraswat,

Member, NITI Aayog and former Director General of Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO). He presented a comprehensive perspective on water security as a foundational pillar of “Viksit Bharat 2047” (Developed India, 2047). He explained how water, energy, and food security are interconnected and stressed the need for integrated planning, innovation, technology adoption, and sustainable management practices. His address reinforced the idea that water availability, accessibility, quality, and resilience must form the core pillars of India’s future development strategy.

Dr. G. Satheesh Reddy, former Chairman of DRDO and former Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister, shared his insights on environmental stewardship and community participation. He emphasized that awareness, scientific thinking, and large-scale public engagement are essential for creating lasting impact. He also highlighted ongoing efforts across the country aimed at ecological restoration and environmental conservation.

One of the most inspiring sessions came from Shri Rajendra Singh, popularly known as the “Waterman of India” and recipient of the Stockholm Water Prize. Drawing from decades of grassroots work in water conservation, he shared powerful stories illustrating the critical role women play in water management. He challenged conventional perceptions regarding gender and water governance, emphasizing that women are often the strongest custodians of natural resources. His message underscored the importance of empowering women as leaders in water conservation and community development.

Shri K.R. Suresh Reddy, Member of Parliament, shared the transformative experience of Telangana’s water initiatives. He highlighted how political commitment, efficient implementation, and strategic investments in irrigation and drinking water infrastructure have significantly improved livelihoods, agricultural productivity, and overall prosperity. His remarks reinforced the importance of leadership and execution in achieving water security goals.

Representatives from academia, media, civil society, youth organizations, and international institutions further enriched the discussion. Speakers highlighted the need for inclusive policymaking, evidence-based decision-making, community engagement, and youth participation. Several contributors emphasized that women's voices must be represented at every level of water governance, from local communities to national policy platforms.



4 - Do Journalists Need PR and Reputation Management?

On May 2, 2026, Dr. Suresh Prabhu, widely recognized as the “PR Guru” held an interactive session with the FCC members and other media professionals on the evolving relationship between journalism, public relations, personal branding and reputation management in today’s digital-first world.

According to him, public relations today extends far beyond traditional media engagement. In the modern communications landscape, PR has become synonymous with “Perception and Reputation Management.” With the rise of social media platforms and digital communication, individuals and organizations are increasingly judged not only by what they do, but by how they are perceived online.

One of the central themes of the session was the growing importance of personal branding for journalists. Dr. Prabhu argued that journalists are no longer merely storytellers working behind the scenes. In the digital era, audiences increasingly follow individual journalists rather than news organizations alone. Readers and viewers connect with trusted voices, specific expertise and recognizable personalities. "People no longer simply follow the news; they follow journalists whose reporting they trust," he emphasised.

He outlined several key benefits of reputation management for journalists:

- Expanding the reach and impact of their stories beyond traditional news platforms.
- Building deeper trust with audiences through transparency, consistency and integrity.
- Creating opportunities for speaking engagements, book deals, fellowships and independent media ventures.
- Developing resilience against misinformation and attacks on credibility.
- Inspiring and mentoring future generations of journalists.

A significant portion of the presentation focused on practical strategies journalists can use to strengthen their professional identity. Dr. Prabhu encouraged participants to identify their unique strengths, define their professional values and establish a consistent presence across digital platforms such as LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube and personal blogs.

An especially engaging segment of the discussion focused on the distinction between public relations and publicity. Responding to questions from participants, Dr. Prabhu explained that publicity is often short-term and promotional in nature, whereas public relations is a long-term process rooted in trust, transparency and credibility. "PR is based on facts and truth. It is about building lasting relationships and reputation," he noted.



5 - FATE OF A MAN - Special Screening

“Remembering History Through Cinema: Screening of The Fate of a Man” was screened at the FCC on May 5, 2026, in collaboration with the Embassy of the Russian Federation.

The event was held in observance of the 81st anniversary of the Soviet Union’s victory over Nazi Germany in World War II, a date of profound significance in Russian history. Guests were welcomed by FCC South Asia representatives, who expressed their appreciation to the Embassy of the Russian Federation for partnering in the event and acknowledged the presence of senior diplomatic representatives, scholars, and distinguished guests.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Roman Babushkin, the Deputy Ambassador of the Russian Federation highlighted the historical importance of Victory Day and the immense sacrifices made by the Soviet people during the war. He noted that more than 27 million Soviet citizens lost their lives in the struggle against Nazism, making it one of the most devastating chapters in the nation’s history. He emphasized that the memory of the war continues to shape Russian society, culture, and national identity, while also serving as a reminder of the importance of peace, international cooperation, and collective security.

The audience then viewed *The Fate of a Man*, directed by Sergei Bondarchuk and released in 1959. Widely regarded as one of the masterpieces of Soviet cinema, the film tells the story of a soldier who endures the horrors of war, the loss of his family, and immense personal suffering, yet ultimately rediscovers hope and humanity through his encounter with an orphaned child. The film remains a moving portrayal of resilience, courage, and compassion in the face of unimaginable adversity. It highlights human dignity in the face of immense suffering.

Special Occasions



In solidarity for child rights



New Year Eve



India in a Glass



Diwali Celebration

Prakash Nanda, Secretary

THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS CLUB OF SOUTH ASIA

THE FEAST • Inaugural Edition 2025–2026