

Interacting with Indian media



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Munir Ahmed 13 November 2018 Updated 16 Nov 7970 views

The experiences of many Pakistani experts, intellectuals, journalists and showbiz in the past reflected that interacting with the Indian media is always risky. [One](#)'s point of view is twisted and spinned out of the context it was actually narrated in. Such kind of incidents had created untoward situations for Pakistanis interacting with the [India](#) media to send the message of love, peace and good neighbourhood for the sake of better understanding between the people of both countries. Many of such efforts and initiatives had been counter-productive rather enhanced the trust deficit between the people and institutions of both states.

I was a bit reluctant to accept the Guwhati Press Club offer to be a guest speaker on their “Meet the Press” programme on Friday November 9 on a video conferencing call. Having been briefed that the Guwhati Press Club members initiated inviting the guest speakers from the neighbouring countries to directly know the perspectives and challenges facing the bilateral and regional harmony and peace, somehow I nodded positive believing that all would be well. And, it went very well. Thanks to the scribes of the Guwhati Press Club for not locking horns on the difference of opinion on the conflicting issues. Especially I am grateful to Babul Gogoi and Nava Thakuria for remaining quite professional to keep the essence of objectivity in the course of interaction and afterwards while they released the brief of the talk to media.

Pakistan-[India](#) politics, [terrorism](#), transboundary issues, CPEC, USA, role of SAARC, people-to-people contact, good neighbourhood, art & culture, entertainment, hypered stories of conflicts and controversies and much more were discussed with the journalists who live four-hour journey by plane to the federal capital of [India](#).

Following are some of the excerpts of my talk the Gauwhati Press Club released to their media and a bit explanation not quoted in their media brief. “Come election season in [India](#) or Pakistan and politicians make hay with hate speech. Bashing the neighbour has always been the easier way out to seek some electoral lift, but political [leaders](#) need to be more responsible, considering the historically fraught relations between the two neighbouring countries.”

In fact, the hate speech has given rise to the religious extremists in the politics on both sides. It had served the vested interest of only a few political elements. The ongoing election campaign in [India](#) is an example where the allegations of cross-border [terrorism](#) on Pakistan are the main content of their election slogans. ‘Modi ka jo yaar hae, gaddaar hae, gaddaar hae’ was one of the extremely hyped slogans of Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) in the May 2018 elections in Pakistan. This slogan was instrumental in lifting the PTI vote bank though by a little. But it damaged the overall image of Mian Nawaz Sharif who hosted Prime Minister Modi in Lahore and Murree with all ‘undue privileges’. Such kind of slogans and hate-speech against each other could serve temporary political vested interest on both sides of borders but in the long run it confuses more the already confused people of both countries.

“Mr Ahmed maintained hard words against rabble-rousing elements in both Pakistani and Indian media as well. Bemoaning the rigid exclusion of each other’s media by governments of the two South Asian nations, he advocated for media exchange programmes as part of a broader people-to-people contact. Pointing out that elements of Indian entertainment and culture, including standard Bollywood fare, are quite popular in Pakistan, Ahmed posed a question, why we cannot allow each other’s official newscasters Doordarshan and PTV to be aired in the respective territories, nonetheless subject to necessary restrictions? “The initiative would help bring about better understanding of mutual concerns and perspectives at the grassroots,” said the outspoken journalist, who used to be a regular contributor to Daily Times and participant to various programs telecast by PTV and other national news channels.”

“Dwelling on the [state](#) of Pakistani media, Ahmed claimed that around [ten](#) English language dailies and several Urdu dailies and periodicals are thriving and they enjoy significant degree of independence. However, alternative media is also booming with nearly half the 210 million Pakistani population hooked to various social media platforms, stated Ahmed admitting that some social media users do get carried away, often making extreme and anti-national comments. He admitted that there is need to regulate the social media.”

“Stressing the importance of resolving the long-standing Kashmir dispute for overall improvement in bilateral relations, Ahmed however pinned the blame for terror activities on fringe elements. Think of the improvements the two countries can make in the lives of common people, if only huge expenditure is not necessitated in mutual conflicts, he asserted.”

“We should all ask ourselves as to which third party has been benefiting with the two neighbours remaining always on loggerheads?” questioned Ahmed adding that a beginning can be made by regional associations like SAARC playing a pro-active role to bind member-countries together at one [level](#), as well as international groups like Lions Club and Rotary Club working to improve popular contact at the ground.”

Most importantly I urged the journalists to write on the [US](#) influence as how it has been creating and enhancing the conflicts in the region. Now our governments, politicians and media need to understand and emphasise on curtailing the [US](#) influence and interventions in the region for more economic and political stability for the sake of peoples' prosperity. It's time for the region to emerge as a bloc based on the [indigenous](#) strengths to combat the challenges confronting the region and the individual countries. Say a collective no to armed or unarmed fifth generation strategic or tactical interventions against any of the country in the region.

Responding to the CPEC, I believed that the infrastructure developed in Pakistan would benefit the entire region. Even [India](#) and other neighbouring countries could benefit from the CPEC interventions if they maintain positive, friendly and peaceful relations with China and Pakistan and [don't](#) hatch any conspiracy against the two countries in connivance with the external elements.

I believe, proving to be a good neighbour, [India](#) also needs to rethink its policies on the transboundary environmental and climate issues too including the air pollution and water [crisis](#). Both have caused enormous loss to Pakistan.

The [writer](#) is an Islamabad-based [policy](#) advocacy, strategic communication and outreach expert. He can be reached at devcom.pakistan@gmail.com. He tweets @[EmmayeSyed](#)

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Munir Ahmed

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