



## The FCC Beast, May 2021

We certainly hope that the COVID-19 difficult times will soon be over and normal activities at FCC will resume. The new Governing Committee of FCC South Asia is looking forward to meet and greet you, and also implement wonderful plans to make the Club vibrant and a happening place. Until then, our activities in the virtual space continue. Here's the new issue of our newsletter - **The Beast** - with a story on COVID-19 reporting by members and other foreign correspondents. You may please also share interesting stories/experiences during your reporting assignments with - Raghavendra Verma, Editor - The Beast, raghu.zdf@gmail.com

### WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS



**Peter Robert Hornung**  
Bureau chief  
ARD German Radio



**Krutika Path**  
South Asia Correspondent  
Associated Press



**Natalie Mayroth**  
Correspondent  
taz



**Joe Wallen**  
India Correspondent  
Daily Telegraph



**Stephanie Findlay**  
South Asia Correspondent  
Financial Times



**Alasdair Pal**  
Correspondent  
Reuters



**Dognac Vanessa**  
South Asia correspondent  
LA CROIX (France) -  
LE TEMPS (Switzerland) -  
LE SOIR (Belgium)



**Amit Khanna**  
Owner, President  
Filmunit



**Deepak Verma**  
Cameraman/Producer  
Phoenix Satellite  
Television Co. Ltd



**Glenda Ruth Kwek**  
Deputy News Editor  
AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE (AFP)



**Andreas Babst**  
Journalist  
Neue Zürcher Zeitung



**Moses Manoharan**  
Chairman  
Global Dialogue Forum



**Jyoti Pande Lavakare**  
South Asia Correspondent  
Health Policy Watch



**Rini Dutta**  
Correspondent  
Kyodo News



**Elizabeth Purnam**  
Correspondent  
AL JAZEERA



**Sheikh Khalid**  
PRODUCER  
DUK-HAUS GERMANY



**Prakash Muthu Swamy**  
Correspondent  
THE SOUTH ASIAN INSIDER,  
NEW YORK



**Astha Rajvanshi**  
Correspondent  
Institute of  
Current World Affairs



**Vidit Mehra**  
TV Presenter & Producer  
BBC



**Sam Kiley**  
Sr. Int. CORRESPONDENT  
CNN



**Carole Dieterich**  
South Asia correspondent  
RTL



**Laura Hoeffinger**  
South Asia Correspondent  
DER SPIEGEL

### APRIL-MAY 2021 EVENTS



#### COFFEE WITH A CORRESPONDENT

The FCC Lecture Series-6  
27 May 2021 at 7pm IST



#### COFFEE WITH A CORRESPONDENT

The FCC Lecture Series-5  
18 May 2021 at 7pm IST



#### Response to India's S.O.S. Call: Geopolitics in the Covid-19 Era

4 May 2021 at 6pm IST



#### Journalists on the Covid-19 frontlines in India

27 April 2021 at 6pm IST



“Memory is a beast, it lies entrenched in the head and keeps coming back,” Indranil Mukherjee, an award-winning AFP photographer, said at a recent FCC webinar.

He was speaking about documenting the Covid-19 pandemic, describing a traumatic event that journalists run to cover and chronicle while other people run away.

This pandemic is different – reporting on human suffering is never easy, but this story comes with it the risk of infection. Journalists have gone to hospitals, crematoriums and graveyards, infected people’s homes. And it is there, taking closeup shots of patients or establishing a connection that allows people to feel safe enough to tell their stories, where the biggest danger lies.

Hoping to capture a patient on a stretcher being wheeled into an emergency room, Raghavendra Verma, producer for German Television ZDF, moved in close with his camera. After he took a few shots, he learned the lady patient had already died. “Shaken and disturbed, the questions that immediately came to mind for the woman’s relatives seemed senseless at that moment,” he said.

Double or triple layers of masks has been for many of us our best protection against this highly contagious disease, but what are the ethics of mask-wearing while asking people to be totally vulnerable and tell us their stories? For Aletta Andre of NOS, Dutch television, it was impossible to decline repeated offers for tea at a health worker’s home. A comment from the host, “you don’t want tea at a poor person’s house,” was enough for her

to set aside the strict protocol.

Ethical questions abound – when to stand back as a silent witness, and when to intervene? At one rural household that Danish Siddiqui from Reuters visited, a patient’s oxygen level was fluctuating between 38 and 48, while the relatives were reading out religious scripture. On Danish’s insistence they decided to take the sick person to a hospital. “The widely prevailing belief is that those who go to hospital don’t ever come back,” he said.

Visits to vaccination centres are a part of our reporting, and Elizabeth Puranam, Al Jazeera’s correspondent, turned one visit into

of energy drinks and salt solution to compensate for the fluids lost in sweat.”

During April and May, several major media houses directed their staff to report only from the confines of their homes and several freelance camera people refused to accept assignments. Sebastien Farcis, correspondent for Radio France Internationale, too decided to stay home for the first 10 days of the crisis and even after that avoided reporting from hospitals.

“This is the first time in a 15-year career that I took this call,” he said. “This crisis was like no other: It hit home and affected us deeply,



an opportunity to file a report. She even recorded a piece to camera while getting inoculated, pulling it off perfectly without any variance in tone while the needle pierced her skin. “I spoke much slower,” she said. “I knew I had only one take.”

Extreme discomfort is how pandemic reporting is described by Joe Wallen, The U.K. Telegraph’s India correspondent in Mumbai, who has recovered from Covid-19 twice. He dons PPE kits at least one a week to report from hospitals. “I feel absolutely exhausted and overwhelmed,” he said, “There are frequent headaches and I take a lot

physically and psychologically.”

Then there is the grief that the non-stop demands of news reporting don’t always allow us to process right away. Tawqeer Hussain, a correspondent for The Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper, lost friends and colleagues to Covid-19. He struggled to work through these losses. He adds, “Sadly people think that journalists have direct access to power and can arrange beds, oxygen and medicines for others. Failing to do so was real pain and put me in an anxiety disorder.”