

Press Note

GNLU Hosts MEA Ambassador Lecture Series on “Evolution of India–US Relations: From Trade to Security”

Gandhinagar, 11 March 2026:

The GNLU Centre for Public and Private International Law, in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs, organized an Ambassador Lecture Series featuring Ambassador Ashok Sajjanhar (IFS Retd.), who delivered an engaging lecture to the students of Gujarat National Law University on the theme “Evolution of India–US Relations: From Trade to Security.”

Ambassador Sajjanhar, a distinguished diplomat with decades of experience in India’s foreign policy and international negotiations, has been closely involved in key moments of India’s diplomatic and trade history. He negotiated for India in the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, which culminated in the creation of the World Trade Organization. During his tenure in Washington in 2005, the historic India–US Civil Nuclear Agreement was signed by India and the United States, marking a major milestone in bilateral relations. He also served as Deputy Chief of Mission to the European Union, Belgium, and Luxembourg from 2005 to 2007, during which the EU–India Strategic Partnership was launched and negotiations for the EU–India Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) were initiated.

In his lecture, Ambassador Sajjanhar traced the transformation of India–US relations over the past few decades. He observed that “Over the last twenty-five years, irrespective of which party was in power in Washington or New Delhi, the trajectory of India–US relations has consistently moved upward.” Highlighting the significance of the nuclear agreement, he remarked that “The civilian nuclear agreement of 2005 marked a historic turning point that transformed India–US engagement from limited cooperation to a strategic partnership.”

Reflecting on India’s growing global role, he emphasized that “India today is not merely a transactional partner but a country with growing strategic weight in the Indo-Pacific.” Drawing from his diplomatic experience, he noted that “The United States recognizes that dealing with the China challenge cannot happen without India as a partner.” He further added that “India’s rise as a major economic power gives it greater confidence to negotiate international agreements in its own national interest.”

Addressing broader global developments, Ambassador Sajjanhar observed that “India has positioned itself as the voice of the Global South, advocating for countries whose concerns are often absent from global decision-making forums.”

At the same time, he highlighted that the nature of India–US relations has undergone a degree of recalibration in recent years. While earlier US strategic documents described India as a key strategic partner, the relationship is increasingly viewed through a more transactional lens, where cooperation depends on specific areas of convergence, particularly in managing regional security challenges.

However, he underscored that “Despite these shifts, the United States will continue to remain a significant partner for India because of the scale of technology, markets, and diaspora linkages between the two countries.” He pointed out that technology cooperation, defence collaboration,

investment flows, trade relations, and the large Indian diaspora in the United States form strong structural foundations of the relationship. Areas such as semiconductors, emerging technologies, defence systems, and capital investments make continued engagement between the two countries strategically important.

Ambassador Sajjanhar concluded by emphasizing that while the United States will remain an important partner, India must also continue to diversify its global partnerships and work with multiple countries wherever interests converge. In this evolving global order, India–US relations may no longer be framed as the single most consequential partnership, but they will remain an important and enduring component of India’s broader strategy of diversified global engagement.

The lecture provided students with valuable insights into the evolution of India’s foreign policy, contemporary geopolitical dynamics, and the intersections of trade, diplomacy, and security in shaping international relations.

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