India – Netherlands Relations

Since 1947, Indo-Dutch relations have been excellent, marked by strong economic and commercial ties, based on foundation of shared democratic ideals, pluralism, multiculturalism and rule of law. Indo-Dutch relations have been multi-faceted and encompass close cooperation in various areas including political, economy, academics and culture. Since the early 1980s, the Dutch Government has identified India as an important economic partner. The relations underwent further intensification after India’s economic liberalisation in the 1990s with growing recognition of India as an attractive trade and investment partner.

2. In light of convergence of economic and political interests, the two countries see value in enhanced dialogue and have constantly striven to strengthen bilateral relations by leveraging each other’s strengths and are currently collaborating in strengthening and expanding the framework of cooperation in various areas like trade and investment, science and technology, information and communication technology, education and culture.

3. There have been periodic high-level exchanges including the visit of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Netherlands in 2004, followed by visits of Dutch Prime Minister Mr. Jan Peter Balkenende in January 2006 and the second State visit of Queen Beatrix to India in 2007. Other visits include:-

Visits from Netherlands:
- November 2007: Foreign Trade Minister Mr. Frank Heemskerk.
- February 2008: Transport & Water Mgmt Minister Mr. Camiel Eurlings
- February 2009: Foreign Trade Minister Mr. Frank Heemskerk
- October 2009: Social Affairs & Employment Minister Mr. Piet H. Donner
- April 2011: Infrastructure & Environment Minister Mrs. Melanie Schultz VHaegen.
- July 2011: Foreign Minister Dr. Uri Rosenthal
- November 2011: Minister of Agriculture and Foreign Trade Mr. Henk Bleker.

Visits from India:
- March 2008: Minister of Science, Technology & Earth Sciences Shri Kapil Sibal
- May 2008: Minister of State Food Processing Industries, Shri Subodh Kant.
- June 2008: Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs, Shri Vayalar Ravi
- September 2008: Minister of Law & Justice, Shri H.R. Bhardwaj
- November 2008: President ICCR, Dr. Karan Singh.
- November 2008: Finance Minister, Shri P. Chidambaram
- September 2009: Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs, Shri Vayalar Ravi.
- May 2010: Visit of Minister of State for Communication & IT, Shri Sachin Pilot
- September 2011: Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs, Shri Vayalar Ravi.
- April 2012: Minister of Shipping, Shri G.K. Vasan

4. With the new Dutch Government having taken over in October 2010 and as part of the outcome of the Foreign Office Consultations held in January 2011, a number of high-level visits have taken place from Netherlands to carry forward the momentum of
bilateral engagement at Ministerial level. These include visits by Dutch Minister of Infrastructure & Environment as well as by Mayors of Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague with delegations.

5. Foreign Minister Prof. Dr. Uri Rosenthal made an official visit to India from 4-6 July 2011, at invitation of Hon’ble External Affairs Minister (EAM). Dutch FM and EAM had extensive discussions on wide range of bilateral, regional and international issues. EAM drew attention to opportunities for Dutch investment in logistics, water management and communications, as the two sides agreed to redouble efforts to enhance trade and economic ties. FM Rosenthal also met National Security Adviser to discuss issues of strategic importance.

6. Shri Vayalar Ravi, Hon’ble Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs and Civil Aviation, visited Netherlands from 24-26 September 2011 and met Mr. Henk Kamp, Dutch Minister of Social Affairs & Employment to discuss bilateral issues. He also inaugurated the first Annual Diaspora Conference in The Hague on 25 September 2011.

7. Dutch Minister for Agriculture & Foreign Trade Mr. Henk Bleker visited India in November 2011. Mayor of City of The Hague Jozias van Aartsen visited New Delhi and Mumbai in December 2011 and had meetings with MOS(EA), MOS(HRD) and President of ICCR. Mayor offered six scholarships for Indian students to study at The Hague Academy of International Law in The Hague. New areas of enhanced bilateral cooperation were explored during visit of Dutch Trade Mission led by Mayor of Amsterdam E.van der Laan to Mumbai, Pune and Bangalore from 25-31 March 2012. This was followed by visit of Union Minister of Shipping Shri G.K.Vasan accompanied by Secretary (Shipping) and delegation to Netherlands from 1-2 April 2012, to attend the launch ceremony of a Dredger acquired by Dredging Corporation of India Ltd (DCI) from Dutch supplier - IHC Merwede at the Ijssel shipyard in Rotterdam.

**Economic and Trade Relations**

8. Trade and investment cooperation - a key component of India-Netherlands relationship - has shown satisfactory growth over the years. Two-way trade has continued to grow steadily, and crossed Euro 5 billion mark in 2010. Netherlands remains among the top ten partners of India in terms of trade volume with positive balance of trade in favour of India. It is also the one of largest investor in terms of foreign direct investment into India during the period April to 2000 to February 2011, amounting to US $ 5.618 billion (4.37 % of total inflows into India). Indian investments into Netherlands during 2008-09 amounted to $ 2788 million, which was 17.2% of total investments abroad from India. In 2009-10 the investments were $ 737 million.

9. Many Dutch multinationals and major companies like Phillips, Shell, Unilever (Hindustan Lever in India), KLM, the three big banks – ABN AMRO, ING, Rabobank and others have a growing and successful presence in India. Dutch SMEs with niche technologies and world-class expertise are also actively looking at the Indian market. Similarly, several Indian companies including major IT companies have established their
presence in Netherlands. The process of opening a branch of State Bank of India in
Amsterdam is at an advanced stage. There have been major acquisitions and mergers by
Indian companies including that of Tata Corus (now Tata Steel), Apollo - Vredestein,
acquisition of Theodoor Gilissen Bankiers by Hindujas and many Indian companies are
exploring the possibilities for further tie-ups.

10. There is potential for further bilateral collaboration in areas like water
management; infrastructure, logistics, ports, highways; inland water transportation; ICT;
biotechnology; agriculture, agro-processing, floriculture; creative and design industry.
Main Indian exports to Netherlands are - textiles & garments; electric machinery &
equipment; agricultural products and processed foods including marine products; leather
goods; cars and other vehicles; organic chemicals; rubber, plastics & works thereof;
mineral and metal products. Main products imported from Netherlands to India are -
machinery/equipment; medical/optical instruments; chemicals; plastics, metal products.

11. A number of Bilateral Treaties, Agreements and MOUs have been concluded in
diverse areas ranging from economic and commercial cooperation, culture, science and
technology and education. These include :-

- Air Services Agreement (May 1951)
- Treaty for the Mutual Surrender of Fugitive Criminals (Anglo - Dutch Treaty of
  1898 effected in 1971)
- Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation (February 1983)
- Cultural Agreement (May 1985)
- Agreement on Scientific Cooperation (November 1985)
- MoU for cooperation in the field of telecommunications (September 1987)
- MoU on environmental cooperation (January 1988)
- Avoidance of Double Taxation Prevention of Fiscal Evasion (July 1988)
- MoU on cooperation in agriculture and animal husbandry (September 1990)
- Agreement for the promotion and protection of investments (November 1995)
- MoU for investment promotion (February 2004)
- MoU on Cultural Cooperation (October 2007)
- MoU in the field of Ports and Maritime Transport and Logistics (February
  2008) - further extended in May 2011 for 3 years.
- MoU on Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation (March 2008).
- Social Security Agreement (October 2009).
- MoU for establishment of “Long-Term Chair for study of Contemporary India”
at Leiden University between Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and
Leiden University (December 2010)
- MOUs proposed to set-up short term Chairs for India Studies in Amsterdam
  University, Erasmus University in Rotterdam as well as Maastricht and
  Nyenrode Universities.
- Letter of Intent (LOI) for Cooperation in areas of Corporate Governance and
  CSRs (June 2011)

Culture and Education
12. The two sides have had regular exchanges in cultural and educational fields including Indology, Arts and contemporary issues. Indo-Dutch cultural cooperation has been based on establishment of cultural institutions, exchange of scholars, cooperation and exchanges in Education & Science, Art & Culture, Literature and Mass Media.

13. The Embassy took a major initiative in 2011 to commemorate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, who had left his footprint in Netherlands during his visit in September 1920. Several activities, as part of the year long commemoration, included installation of Tagore’s busts at Leiden University and Municipal Public Library in The Hague, screening of film documentaries, staging of Tagore’s play ‘Rakta Karabi’, Variety cultural programmes, Road Shows and Debates in schools on Vision and Relevance of Tagore. The 2011-12 cultural agenda also included Diwali celebration, Indian Arts Film Festival and ‘Kantha’ exhibition in The Hague. Mayor of City of The Hague during his visit to India in Dec 2011 expressed interest in organizing an “India Month” in October 2012 at the newly launched Gandhi Centre in The Hague.

14. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and Leiden University, Netherlands was signed on 8 December 2010 for establishment of the first ever Long-Term Chair for study of Contemporary India at Leiden University. The Chair started functioning from September 2011. Similar Chairs are contemplated to be set-up soon in Amsterdam University, Maastricht University and Erasmus University, Rotterdam. Erasmus University has also signed MOUs with IIIT, Allahabad, Tata Fundamental Research Institute and Law & Governance Faculty of Jawaharlal Nehru University.

15. Netherlands has second largest population of people of Indian origin in Europe (next only to UK). It is home to about 220,000 Indian and Surinami Hindustani Diaspora, wholly integrated into Dutch society. Although their forebears left India nearly 150 years ago, the Hindustani-Surinami community has deep cultural links with India and is active in promoting cultural cooperation through well-established institutions. There has been a Member of Parliament from the community. Prominent Surinamese are members of Municipal Councils, like current Dy Mayor of Hague Municipality - Mr. Rabin Baldewsinh.

16. Mahatma Gandhi was honoured in Netherlands in a special way through opening of an Indian Cultural Centre named “Gandhi Centre” in The Hague on occasion of his birth anniversary on 2nd October 2011. Dr. Karan Singh, Hon’ble MP and President of ICCR inaugurated the Gandhi Centre in presence of Mr. Jozias van Aartsen, Mayor of The Hague. Opening of the Centre fulfilled the long-standing aspirations of Indian and Surinami Hindustani community in Netherlands.

17. NRIs and PIOs from Netherlands regularly participate in Pravasi Bharatiya Divas conventions. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Europe - the third edition in the series of regional mini-PBDs - was held in The Hague on 19 September 2009, in partnership with
Embassy, Hague Municipality and Indian Diaspora organizations in Netherlands. The Annual Diaspora Conference was held in The Hague on 25 September 2011. It is unprecedented that two prominent Persons of Indian origin based in Netherlands have been awarded the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman (in 2009 and 2011) for their contribution to Diaspora related issues. The last awardee – Mr. Wahid Saleh, is a social entrepreneur and a community leader based in Netherlands who has received the award for his contribution to activities supporting educational institutions in Assam and Northeast region in India.

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