

Foundation for Indian Diaspora in Europe

Conference on

**“Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands:
Achievements, Contributions and Challenges”**

Held at World Forum, De Haag

On 25th September 2011

Organized by

The Foundation for Indian Diaspora in Europe (*FIDE*)

A Report of Proceedings of the Conference

by

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(*FIDE*)
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Preface

Inspired by the success of the First European *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBDE)* Conference, organized in The Hague on 19th September, 2009 by the *Foundation for Indian Diaspora in Europe (FIDE)*, in which the Indian Diaspora leaders and delegates from 20 countries participated, the leaders of the participating Diaspora organizations met a number of times to discuss future activities. The success of the *PBDE* was a result of joint efforts by the Indian and Suriname Hindustani organizations. During the meetings preceding the *PBDE* and subsequently, it was realized by both the communities that though they remained separate for many decades, there was much in common between them and they should cooperate with each other in future in organization of major activities relating to Indian Culture and Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands in general.

Keeping the common interest in mind it was decided that there should be a follow up of the September 2009 Conference in 2011 but it should be restricted to Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands. It was felt that such a conference could bring both the communities much closer to each other. In the meetings different themes and options were discussed and finally it was decided to have a one day conference on the theme of “*The Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands: Achievements, Contributions and Challenges*”. It was realized that though the two groups have made considerable progress in different sectors of the Dutch society, their representation in some other sectors like sports, law and order, politics was very limited and there were still some obstacles in other areas for further progress. Also, there was a consensus that the Conference should be organized in such a way that both the groups get an equal chance in organizing and presenting experiences, views and proposals. Despite the fact that most of the leaders and the members of the Hindustani community speak perfect English, it was decided to keep the conference bilingual. A decision was also taken to pay special attention to the issues concerning the women and youth.

This report of the Conference provides in detail all the activities of the Conference, names and details of various presentations, discussions on them and the cultural programme. It was a great success and I would like to thank all those who contributed to this outcome. In particular I am grateful to Hon’ble Mr. Vayalar Ravi, who obliged us by his participation along with four senior officers of his ministry, including the MOIA Secretary Dr. Didar Singh, H.E. Mr. Jozias van Aartsen, The Mayor of The Hague and former Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, H.E. Ms. Bhaswati Mukherjee, the Ambassador of India to the Netherlands, H.E. Mr. Bob Hiensch, the Dutch Ambassador to India and Mr. Rabin Baldewsingh, the Deputy mayor of The Hague, for their encouragement, strong support and gracing the event by their presence. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of more than thirty volunteers, without whom the conference couldn’t have become a real community event.

I hope the close cooperation between the Diaspora organizations of the two groups which we saw in the two Diaspora conferences, will also continue in future, both at the group and individual level, between the two communities. As a mark of this, we are publishing this report both in English and Dutch for wider distribution and appreciation. I conclude by expressing my profound appreciation and gratitude to Dr. V.V. Moharir, Drs. N. Mathura, Mr. Suresh Chotoe and Dr. H.U. Qureshi for preparing this report.

Jasbir Singh,

President,

Foundation for Indian Diaspora in Europe

Hoofddorp, July, 2012

INDIAN DIASPORA CONFERENCE

on

**The Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands:
Achievements, Contributions and Challenges**

Sunday the 25th September, 2011

Held at

The World Forum, The Hague

PROGRAMME

08:30-9.45 Arrival and registration of participants

Inaugural Session 10:00 – 11:15

09.50-09:55 Opening remarks by Mr. **Jasbir Singh**, President, Foundation for Indian

Diaspora in Europe & President, Foundation for Critical Choices for India

09:55-10.00 Lighting the ceremonial lamp by the Dutch & Indian dignitaries, assisted by Mr. **Rajen Ramnath**, President *SHON*, ex-President *EEKTA*, Treasurer *FIDE*

10:00-10:10 Welcome Address by H.E. **Ms. Bhaswati Mukherjee**, Ambassador of India to the Netherlands

10:10-10:20 “Welcome to the City of The Hague” by H.E. Mr. **Jozijs van Aartsen**, The Mayor of The Hague & Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands

10:20-10:30 Address by Hon’ble Minister, Vaylar Ravi

10:30-10:40 Address by H.E. Mr. **Bob Hiensch**, Ambassador of The Netherlands to India

10:40-10:45 Greetings from Suriname by Mr. **Chander Prasad Santokhi**, Opposition Leader and former Minister of Justice of Suriname

10.45-11.10 Interaction with audience (written questions)

Plenary Session – I 11:10 – 12:30

11:10-11:15 Introductory remarks by the Moderator **Prof. Ruben Gowricharn**

11:15-11:25 Achievements & Contributions of Indians in The Netherlands by **Ram Lakhina**, *PBD-Samman Awardee, Chairman of the Netherlands-India Chamber of Commerce & Trade (NICCT), President Emeritus FCCI and Former Chairman of GOPIO International*

11:25-11:35 Achievements & Contributions of the Hindustani Community by **Rajindre Tewari**, *President GOPIO Netherlands & Secretary-General, Foundation for Indian Diaspora in Europe*

11:35-11:45 Interaction with audience

11:45-11:55 Challenges for the Indian Community by **Drs. Badri Madan**, *Chairman, Indian Business Chamber & President Netherlands-India Association, “Challenges for the Surinami-Hindustani Community”*

11:55-12:10

Speaker I:

Hon’ble **Tanya Jadananansing**, Member of Parliament, the Netherlands

Speaker II:

H.E. Mr. **Rabin Baldewsingh**, Deputy Mayor, The Hague

12:10-12:30 Interaction with the audience

Lunch Break: 12:30 – 13:15

I – Business Session 13.15-14.45

13:15-13:20 Introductory remarks by the Moderator: **Drs. Rajindre Tewari**, *President GOPIO Netherlands and Secretary-General, Foundation for Indian Diaspora*

13:20-13:35 Presentation by **Sujata Sudarshan**, CEO, Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC)

13:35-13:45 Presentation by **Ankit Gupta**, Executive Officer *OIFC*

13:45-13:55 Presentation by **Virat Dewanji**, Regional Director, *Kotak Mahindra Bank*

13:55-14:05 Presentation on State Bank of India (SBI) by **P.N. Prasad**, CEO, Benelux

14:05-14:15 Presentation by **Drs. Vipin Moharir**, Director, *Nintec Ltd*

14:15-14:45 Interaction with the audience

II – Youth Session 14.45-15.40

14:45-14:50 Introductory remarks by the Moderator **Lavesh Lakhina**, *President, Indian Expat Society*

14:50-14:57 *Youth & Media* by **Maheshwari Autar**

14:57-15:04 Successful migration & integration in Dutch Society by **Drs. Darshdeep Baidwan**

15:04-15:11 Presentation by **Amarnath Dhanpat**, *Chairman, Hindu Students Forum, the, Netherlands*

15:11-15:18 *Keeping connected with the ancestral land* by **Ritika Mehra**, *Bridging the Gap Foundation*

15:18-15:25 *Opportunities for Indian youth in the Netherlands* by **Dr. Pramod Agrawal**, *President, AADHAR*

15: 25-15:40 Interaction with the audience

III – Women Session 15.40-16.45

15:40-15:45 Introductory remarks by the Moderator, **Vidhya Sampath**, *Director, External Relations, Tata Consultancy Services, Board Member, NICCT & Trustee FCCI*

15:45-15:60 Interviews with **Mrs. Henna Mathura**, *President, Foundation SARITA* and **Dr. Jyotsna Gupta**, a medical specialist, about “*Service to the Community*”

16:00-16:05 Film over ‘**The Women**’ by the writer and film maker Mrs. **Nandini Bedi**

16:05-16:15 “*The Inter-Cultural Dialogue*,” an interview with Mrs. **Rabina Anis**, member, the *Indian Ladies Club*, and with Mrs. **Nandini Bedi**

16:15-16:20 Film about entrepreneurship

16:20-16:28 An Interview with **Prof. Dr. Sharda Nandram**, *President, Women Wing, GOPIO Netherlands*, and *Trustee, FCCI*

16:28-16:45 Interaction with the audience

Concluding Session 16:45-17:15

Chair: H.E. **Shri Vayalar Ravi**, *Minister, MOIA*

16:45-16:50 Introductory remarks by the Moderator **Prof. Dr. Pramod Saxena**, *former President FCCI*

16:50-16:55 **Report on the Inaugural & Business sessions** by **Dr. Vasant Moharir**

16:55-17:00 **Report on the Youth session** by **Vishal Solanki**

17:00-17:05 **Report on the Women session** by **Satarupa Bose Roy**

17:05-17:15 **Concluding remarks** by the *Chairman*

COFFEE/TEA BREAK : 17:15 - 17:45

Cultural Programme 17:45 – 19:45

(Coordinated by Mr. *Suresh Chotoe*)

Chief Guest: Mr. **Rabin Baldewsingh**, Deputy Mayor, The Hague

17:45-17:55 **Impressions of a beautiful morning with the morning rituals**, followed by **Dance Company (DCM): Tilanna fusion dances** depicting the culture from various parts of India

17:55-18:00 Introduction of the Chief Guest by **Rajen Ramnath**, *President SHON, Ex-President EEKTA*, and *Treasurer, FIDE*

18:00-18:10 Opening speech and a song by Mr. **Rabin Baldewsingh**

18:10-18:30 Music & Songs by **Ms Moushmi Oberoi & party**

18:30-18:35 Song by **Mona Siddiqui**

- 18:35-18:45 **DCM:** *Mayachandra and Dandia raas (Tribal and Gujrati dances)*
- 18:45-19:05 **“Through the eyes of my city”:** **Kalpana Raghuraman and party**
- 19:05-19:15 **Musical Intermezzo:** **Rishi Dhir** (Music & song) with **Walid Nawrouzi** on *Tabla*
- 19:15-19:25 **DCM:** *“Mere Dholna”* and contemporary Palace Dance (from Jodhpur) about love, (fusion dance with Indian and Western flavour with, among others *Evita*, from America)
- 19:25-19Z:35 **Baithakgana Swastika & Ensemble**, led by **Dawinder Sewnath** accompanied with dance by **Dancetrio Excellent Moves**
- 19:35-19:45 **DCM:** **“Rajasthani and Billu Bhayankar”**: a joyful dance with acrobatics and tricks
- Final dance performance by artists from DCM and others
- 19:45 **Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks by Mr. Jasbir Singh, Chairman Organizing Committee**

Report on the Proceedings of the Conference

1. Inaugural Session

Mr. Jasbir Singh, President of the Foundation for Indian Diaspora in Europe welcomed Hon'ble Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs, Mr. Vayalar Ravi and senior staff Members accompanying him, H.E. Ambassador of India to the Netherlands, Ms. Bhaswati Mukherjee, H.E. Mr. Jozias van Aartsen, Mayor of The Hague, H.E. Mr. Bob Hiench, Ambassador of the Netherlands to India, chairpersons and speakers of the Conference, invited distinguished guests and participants in the Conference. He informed the audience about the successful joint organization of the *First European Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* in September 2009, by the organizations of the Indian and the Surinami Hindustani communities in the Netherlands which was graced by the Hon'ble Minister of MOIA among others, and that the main focus of the second one was more on the Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands, their achievements, contributions and challenges. He was very happy that the Hon'ble Minister was again present for this Conference, along with a number of his senior officials. He further thanked the H.E. the Ambassador of India, Ms. Bhaswati Mukherjee, H.E. Mr. Jozias van Aartsen, the Mayor of The Hague, H.E. Mr. Bob Hiensch, Ambassador of the Netherlands to India for their inspiration and support. He then introduced Ms Rashmi Sharma the Master of Ceremony for the Conference and invited all attendees to participate effectively in the Conference.

President Jasbir Singh then invited the VVIPs to join in the Lighting of the Ceremonial Lamp. Mr. Rajen Ramnath helped the VVIPs to light the Ceremonial Lamp which signified the auspicious start of the Conference Programme.

The Master of Ceremony, Ms Rashmi Sharma then took over and informed the audience about the detailed programme of the Day and invited Her Excellency Ambassador of India, Ms Bhaswati Mukherjee to give her welcome address to Conference.

Her Excellency Ambassador of India, Ms. Bhaswati Mukherjee then gave her welcome address. Thanking both the Hon'ble Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs and the Hon'ble Mayor of The Hague for gracing the occasion she stated, that the relations between the Netherlands and India date back to more than 400 years but acquired special significance since 1947, at India's independence. She further stated that the bilateral relations between the two countries have grown up considerably in different sectors, in addition to trade, investment and culture. According to her there was a good deal of common features between the two countries despite differences in size and the stage of development. She then mentioned indicators of increased interaction between the two countries and emphasized that the Netherlands is one of the top partners of India in Europe.

Commenting on the theme of the Conference, Madam Ambassador mentioned that the Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands is the second biggest in Europe and that the Government of India is providing a number of facilities to them for making a useful contribution to economic and social development of India. She further added that the Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands has created for itself a good reputation and has played an important role in fostering better relations with the host country. As an indicator of this she mentioned that two distinguished members of Diaspora have been honoured by both the governments for their contributions. She mentioned that the two groups of Indian Diaspora in the country are increasingly coming closer and have

organized together the First *European Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* in The Hague in September 2009 and the present Conference. Stating that there is a common thread running in the contribution of both Diaspora groups, and in this context she appreciated the useful role played by the President of the Foundation, Mr. Jasbir Singh in realizing this.

She further elaborated that the host government has mentioned number of times that both the Indian Diaspora groups have developed the reputation of accepting whole heartedly the values and norms of the Dutch society, about their peaceful integration with the wider Dutch society and using effectively facilities made available by the Dutch government and the society. She stated that the members of the two groups have achieved prominence in different sectors of the society. Commenting on the dynamic economy of India she stated that in the Conference there will be possibilities of stating the achievements as well as future challenges in this regard.

Narrating the work being done by the Indian Embassy in facilitation of visas, she also mentioned the setting up of the long awaited India Culture Centre which was inaugurated on the occasion of Gandhiji's birth anniversary on 2nd October by Dr. Karan Singh, Chairman of Indian Council of Cultural Relations. Concluding she emphasized that possibly Indian Diaspora is the best example in the world of integration, balancing, nurturing own culture as well as imbibing the values and norms of the host community. Paying tribute to the ancient nature of the Indian Civilization, she quoted Mark Twain to the effect that India is a birth place of many important religions of the world, of mathematics and is a grandmother of all civilizations.

The Mayor of The Hague H.E. Mr. Jozias van Aartsen then welcomed the participants to the City of The Hague, also called the City of Peace and Justice, and commented on the long history of relations between the two countries. In this context he mentioned about the monuments of the Dutch presence in India and that the Treaty of The Hague had also to do with the exchange of territories of Malabar settlement in India with the Portuguese in the colonial period. However, since independence of India in 1947, the relations between The Netherlands and India have grown in many areas including trade, investment, culture, art and higher education. He also emphasized that the *Randstad* area which includes The Hague and Rotterdam, is also now home to many Indian companies.

The Mayor further stated that the City of The Hague is closely linked up with India and is also the home of the second largest group of Indian Diaspora in Europe. Many Indian cultural activities take place in The Hague such as *Milan Mela*, Indian Film Festival and recently a statue of Rabindranath *Tagore* whom he called "*Gospel of Humanity*", was unveiled in the Hague City Hall Library and the India Culture Centre was inaugurated on 2nd October. He described centuries old relations between India and the Netherlands as reflecting solidarity between the East and the West and hoped that they remain so in future.

Hon'ble Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs, Mr. Vayalar Ravi greeted all participants and stated that he was very happy to be in The Hague once again after the successful First European *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* in The Hague in September 2009. He emphasized that the Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands have also contributed to development of amicable social, economic and political relations between the two countries. He then narrated the long history of Indian Diaspora in different countries which today totals more than 27 million and praised the manner in which the Surinami Hindustanis have retained their cultural heritage and are still able to speak the language of their forefathers. He expressed his happiness over the fact that many members of the

Indian Diaspora have made considerable progress and occupy important positions in different sectors of the Dutch society.

Hon'ble Minister then highlighted a number of measures introduced by his ministry for facilitating economic, social and charitable activities of Indian Diaspora such as Prime Minister's Advisory Council of People of Indian Origin, India Development Foundation as One Stop Agency, Overseas Indian Facilitation *Centre*, *Centre* for Overseas Employment for Indian workers abroad, Research *Centre* on Indian Diaspora, Know India Programme for Indian Diaspora Youth, etc.

Stating that his ministry is always interacting with Indian Diaspora at the *Annual Pravasi Bharatiya Conference* in India as well as at country and regional Diaspora conferences, also mentioned about some of the recent changes introduced by the government such as grant of voting rights to non-resident Indians, the Overseas India Card, PIO Card, signing of Social Security Agreements with the Netherlands and other countries. He concluded his address by stating that already two members of Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands have been honoured with the *Pravasi Bharatiya Samman* and he hoped to see many members of the audience at the forthcoming *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* Conference in India at Jaipur.

H.E. Mr. Bob Hiensch, Ambassador of The Netherlands to India, then presented the Perceptive of the Dutch Embassy in India. Narrating the milestones in the long history of relations between the two countries starting from the setting up of the VOC trading post, development of broad based bilateral relations since 1947, strong relations of development cooperation which ended in 2003 (at the request of India), and the growing relations now in trade, economy, culture, higher education, fashion, architecture, media, etc. Mentioning that though there may be minor differences between the two like the exact figures of bilateral trade, there are many similarities between them such as multi-ethnic society, non-violence and tolerance and the relations are mutually beneficial. In this context he mentioned that 129 Indian companies are functioning in the Netherlands and some Dutch companies were in India but many more Dutch companies are now setting up their shop in India. He appreciated the changes in rules and procedures made by Government of India which make it an attractive country for the Dutch. Mentioning many areas where future cooperation can be mutually beneficial, he particularly emphasized water, irrigation, science and technology. Indian exports to the Netherlands are also increasing, though at times they do not comply with European requirements. Mentioning that India is the biggest producer of some agricultural products and also has the biggest animal population in the world, cooperation in agro-processing can be mutually very profitable.

Concluding Hon'ble Mr. Hiensch stated that there were no major problems between the two countries, delegations from different sectors and ministers are visiting each other's countries, and relations are good. He mentioned that recently the Dutch Foreign Minister Prof. Rosenthal was in India to discuss common issues including cooperation in preventing terrorism. Admiring Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands he suggested that they can be a bridge between the two countries, help new arrivals, act as catalyst in science and technology, and change perception of India in the Dutch society, particularly that of the politicians

Address by Mr. Chander Prasad Santokhi, Former Surinami Justice Minister

Mr. Chander Prasad Santokhi who was visiting the Netherlands was invited by the Surinami Hindustani community to address the Conference. In his address he thanked the Conference authorities for the invitation and informed the audience that he was visiting the Netherlands in the context of the new political strategy of

Surinam. He congratulated both the Surinami Hindustani and the Indian communities on the progress made by them and their contributions. He said that he was discussing with the Dutch Government the problems and issues of the entire Surinami Diaspora in the Netherlands which also includes Hindustanis. He also thought that what this Conference was discussing would be also of use to him and Surinam.

Discussion on Inaugural Session

To make the discussion useful and efficient in available time, participants were requested to give their questions in advance to the speakers. Mr. Wahid Saleh complimented the MOIA for prompt reply to his query and asked Minister Vayalar Ravi regarding delays in implementation of OCI, PIO cards, to which he replied that in some cases it takes a lot of time due to people carrying many passports but further details to be given by the Secretary of the Ministry in his presentation. Another participant asked whether it is not possible to extend the limit to the fifth generation for the grant of OCI and PIO card, to which the Minister replied that it is not possible at present. The Ambassador H.E. Bob Hiensch was asked a question why much higher trade relations with China despite violation of human rights and other problems as compared to a democratic India, to which he replied that comparison between India and China is not realistic as China had opened its economy much earlier than India.

Presentation of an Indian Souvenir to the Mayor of the Hague

Before the start of the Plenary Session, Hon'ble Minister Vayalar Ravi of MOIA presented to H.E. Mr. Jozias van Aartsen, the Mayor of The Hague a specially embroidered multi-coloured, hand-woven Indian souvenir, for his lively interest in India and Indians.

Plenary Session – I

Prof. R. Gowricharn, Moderator of the Session after introducing himself and the speakers in the Session informed the audience about the origin of the word "Diaspora" derived from the phenomenon of the Jewish Exodus and that at present it is used to convey the process of transnational community formation. Further, integration depends upon the balance between the host and own culture. There are two ways of integration and retention of own culture and presently there are two generations of two different groups of Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands. Session one will discuss the achievements and challenges of these two groups.

Achievements and Contributions of Indians in the Netherlands

Mr. Ram Lakhina, the first speaker in this session stated that it was an important day for Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands. Beginning in September 2009 with the First European *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* today it can be described as "*Day of Solidarity*" as both groups of Indian Diaspora are discussing together their achievements and challenges. This is also an occasion for awareness of our common cultural heritage and our potential of contribution to socio-economic development of India. Mentioning that he had the good fortune of visiting Indian Diaspora in more than 75 countries where he found a common factor between them namely that they were doing much better than other immigrant communities, and in some cases even better than the host community. Members of Indian Diaspora are not only to be seen as senior staff of Multinationals and other World organizations but also as heads of states, ministers, judges, academics, business tycoons, etc not only in developing countries but also in developed ones such as the UK, Canada, New Zealand, USA.

Raising the Question “what is it so special about the Indian Diaspora which explains their success abroad”, he stated that probably there are many factors which can explain this but in general it is the Indian spirit to work hard and succeed even under difficult circumstances. Commenting on the achievements of the Indian community in the Netherlands, Mr. Lakhina stated that the Indian community in this country has a recent history and starting from the scratch its members have risen to the highest levels in their fields. Even Indian businesses with humble beginnings have grown up both in number and turnover, one even achieving the status of a multinational. Their combined turnover is estimated to be 1 Billion Euro or more.

Concentrating on the unique contributions of the community, Mr. Lakhina mentioned them as “*building institutions*” and enumerated the good work being done by community organizations like Netherlands-India Association (*NIA*), Foundation for Critical Choices for India (*FCCI*), Netherlands India Chamber of Commerce and Trade (*NICCT*) and *Indiawijzer*, a treasure house of info on and about India. As examples of their contribution, he mentioned the celebration of *NIA*’s Diamond Jubilee, Foundation’s proposal to grant voting rights to NRIs among others, *NICCT*’s attempts to bring Indian and Dutch businesses together in promoting Indo-Dutch trade relations and *Indiawijzer*, a one person institution as a focal point of India related information.

Achievements & Contributions of the Hindustani Community

Drs. Rajindre Tewari started about the difficulties of different terms used by the Indians and Hindustanis in the Netherlands to describe themselves and the need for some agreement on this issue. Describing achievements of the Hindustani community he stated that though being only 2% of the Dutch population its achievements in all major sectors of economic and social life of the Netherlands, are quite disproportionate. Taking example of the Social Sector, he stated that Hindustanis have been able to ensure their rights in the welfare system, have their own cultural and charitable organizations like *Seva*, Special Homes for Old People, their own print and audio-visual media institutions, etc. In economy, finance and trade also Hindustanis are becoming prominent, in addition in major professions like medicine, real estate, higher education, industrial banking, trade, technology etc. A number of Hindustanis own their own homes and are owners of many small companies in different sectors. The community was also able to get a Dutch translation of “*Bhagwat Gita*” and other Indian scriptures as well as special Old Age Homes for community members. Publications in the name of community members, including women are increasing and some are also represented in important organizations like Rotary, Think Tanks, Earth, etc. Even in the political arena there are many members of local government councils, members of parliament, senior administrators, Deputy Mayor, etc. Further, some prominent members of the community have also been bestowed special honour by the Queen. However, as compared to countries like the UK, Hindustani community is not represented in greater number and in higher political offices. As examples of institutions for maintaining and promoting community heritage, he mentioned the Surinam House in The Hague and *OHM TV*. As a crowning effort he mentioned the creation of a Chair for Diaspora Studies in Amsterdam University on the initiative of one of the Hindustani Diaspora organizations.

Mr. Tewari concluded his presentation by stating that we are going through a process of unifying the community and the rise of India as a global economic power, is facilitating this further.

Interaction with Audience

In response to a question why the representation of the community was limited in the political arena, Mrs. Jadanansing, Member of Dutch Parliament stated that the Hindustani youth do not have interest in politics and there are only a few of us as role models at present. In her opinion it was better to concentrate on the younger members of the community and to motivate them to join different political parties. Questions were also raised about the distinction between NRIs and PIOs and how to bridge the gap between the two groups of Indian community. Mr. Lakhina stated that two groups of Indian Diaspora lived here for the last 25 years but did not come much closer to each other. This was not deliberate. At individual level some members of both the groups interacted with each other but formally there was little by way of joint community activities. The reasons for these were language difficulties, different perceptions of problems and some value difference. However, leaders of both the communities are aware of this and efforts are now being made to organize at least some joint activities in a year. We did that in September 2009 for the First *European Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* and now in the present Conference. It is just a small beginning and we can look forward to more such interaction.

Challenges for the Indian Community

After Mr. Lakhina mentioned the achievements and contributions of the Indian Community, Drs. Badri Madan narrated the history of Indian Diaspora and some of its present day problems. In this context he also mentioned about some of the organizations of the Community, namely Netherlands India Association (NIA) and Indian Business Chamber (IBC) and some of the work they did such as appealing to the EU Commission on visa problems for Indians, bringing the Indian and the host Dutch community nearer to each other for appreciation of mutual culture, Indian businessmen bridging the gap in the market for affordable good quality textiles in the wake of demise of the Dutch Textile Industry, etc. As challenges he mentioned about mastering of the Dutch language and coming to terms with a different legal system by the first generation Indians, maintaining own culture as well as trying to integrate with the main stream Dutch society, maintaining the identity of their children in a different cultural environment and almost non existing representation in sports, media and political institutions by the Indian community. He also mentioned that though Indians shared with the Dutch community many values and norms, they felt uncomfortable with some social behaviour and practices like kissing in public, phenomenon of “homos”, “lesbians”, “living together without marriage”, etc. He narrated another problem particularly which educated wives of the first generation Diaspora members faced, namely that of not being able to work for first five years. He also described briefly the work of the two organizations of the community, namely the India Netherlands Association (NIA) which had been celebrating its Diamond Jubilee during the year 2011 and which has been playing an important role in promoting bilateral cultural relations as well as the Indian Business Chamber which tries to promote interest of Indian business community in the Netherlands.

Commenting on the many opportunities and facilities which the second generation of Indian community have in the Netherlands, Drs. Badri Madan observed that the Netherlands is a knowledge based society in which not only the members of the existing Indian Diaspora have access but already more than 5,000 *Knowledge Workers* from India have also benefited by this. He ended his presentation by stating, “We are proud of our culture and achievements but we also need to make ourselves more visible.”

Challenges for the Hindustani Community

Hon'ble **Mrs. Tanya Jadanansingh**, a Member of the parliament for the Labour Party and its spokesperson for higher education, mainly emphasized the proactive role of Diaspora in the Dutch politics. She expressed concern about the youth in the Hindustani community shying away from politics and not trying to be more active in sectors like sports and media. Referring to an article by Mr. Rabin Baldewsingh in which he reprimanded Hindustani youth for spending their weekends only watching Bollywood films, she stated that they need to be more active in the Dutch society and take active part in ongoing discussions on different issues in the society. She complained that there were only two Members of Parliament from the Hindustan Community, and still no one in leadership role in the media, or chairpersons of important committees and that the women of the community need also to be more active in the social life of the country. In this context she was glad to see young persons like Ms Maheshwari Autar are active in the media and that the Secretary of the Surinamese Students Association is a lady. She advised Surinami Hindustani Youths to participate in the political debates taking place on important issues of the country and becoming members of political parties of their choice and also try to be active in student organizations. Referring to the problem of lack of dialogue between the old and the young generation in some cases, **Mrs. Jadanansingh** mentioned the network she has established for this purpose.

She informed the audience that at individual level she is trying to establish a network of Surinam Hindustani Youth to discuss some of the issues and challenges facing the community as well as for community care for the society. She concluded that she is action oriented and would welcome more interaction with the community in action oriented projects. She ended her presentation by stating that "Knowledge is not power but a potential power which becomes power when acted upon"

Deputy Mayor of The Hague, **Mr. Rabin Baldewsingh** continued further on the theme by stating that there is a hue and cry in the Surinami newspapers about emancipation of Hindustan Community and their integration with the host Dutch community. He stated that there are some problems here for the first generation Hindustanis whose main identity still remains Indian but nevertheless they need to participate effectively in the main stream Dutch society, rather than continuing a parallel society of their own. He admonished particularly the youth as being busy only with Bollywood and participating only in cultural activities. He further stated that it is my outcry that they come out of their shell.

He then informed the audience how the two groups of Indians are coming together for organizing common cultural activities. In this connection he described the most successful meeting of the two groups at Madurodam where agreement on when and where the Indian Diaspora Conference should take place, what should be its theme, how the work should be divided between individuals and organizations of the two communities, how it should be financed, etc, was discussed. The result is the present conference which is very well attended and appreciated by all concerned. He also thanked The Hague Municipal leadership for helping the community with its activities.

Mr. Rabin Baldewsingh, commenting on earlier presentation of Mr. Ram Lakhina regarding how to maximize the advantage of demographic dividend of India and the need of the Netherlands for young workers for the health and other sectors, stated that the Netherlands needs India to fill the gap of 200,000 young workers which is likely to exist. He concluded his presentation by informing the audience

about the importance which the City of The Hague gives to India and forthcoming of the visit of the Mayor of The Hague to India in near future which will further cement the bond between the city of The Hague and India.

INTERACTION WITH THE AUDIENCE

The Moderator of the Session, Prof. R. Gowricharn summarized the gist of presentations in the Session and invited audience to ask question or make observations on the presentation. In answer to a question about representation of the community in the parliament, Ms Tanya Jadnanansing that though in the parliament there is only one representative of the community, there are many in local councils. She further informed the audience that she has initiated a special programme in politics for the Surinami Hindustani youth. In this context she said the Hindustani youth are shy and the Indians have a problem with the Dutch language. To a question on the confusing terminology of “NRIs, PIOs, Hindustani Surinami” to describe Indian Diaspora, Mr. Rabin Baldewsingh stated that he was there as a member of the Surinami Hindustani Diaspora with an Indian face. We are Indian in terms of culture but Dutch by nationality. On this someone retorted, “Is not easy to say I am a Dutch national with Indian roots?” Mr. Baldewsingh further clarified that whether Surinamese consider themselves Indians or not, *Indianness* in us is not threatened.

Dr. Govindankutty Menon, referring to the comments made by the Minister of Overseas Affairs earlier on the India’s interaction with the Dutch East Indies Company, stated that the staff of VOC studied Indian languages when they traded with India. In this context he mentioned that The Treaty of Trivendrum was in both languages: the local as well as Dutch language. Even today some Dutch individuals are learning Indian languages for doing business with Indian companies.

The Session Moderator then summarized the Session’s discussion and thanked the speakers and the audience for their participation.

I - Business Session

Moderator of the Session, **Drs. Rajindre Tewari**, introduced all speakers in the Business Session and remarked that the scope for business relationship between the Netherlands and India is quite considerable and with the facilities now provided both by the Dutch and the Indian government increased trade and investment will benefit both countries.

Ms Sujata Sudarshan, CEO Overseas Indian Centre of MOIA informed the audience that the Centre was jointly established and operated by FICCI and MOIA for providing information and help to business people from both countries. The Centre has, among other things, developed a Network of 2 million Diaspora members in the Netherlands and other countries to help them in real estate, outsourcing and other business activities. She further informed that she stated that as a result of this and other measures taken by the Government, NRI deposits, FDI and individual investments have increased considerably. The OIFC also functions as a clearing house of information.

The CEO of OIFC further informed the audience about the second main activity, namely knowledge exports. For this a Diaspora Knowledge Network is also being established. To illustrate both the volume

and diversity of work done by the OIFC, she provided considerable statistics relating to investment toolkits, projects handled, online registrations, queries, etc as well as the Journal and the Newsletter emphasizing changes, opportunities and achievements. The OIFC also works in collaboration with Premium Knowledge Partners, Media Partners and the recent establishment of ICT enabled platform.

Mr. Ankit Gupta, Executive Officer, OIFC, added further details on the OIFC by first describing the growing economy of India with 8.9% growth rate which is encouraging the NRIs and foreigners to invest more in India and still attractive possibilities in different sectors, in particular infrastructure. Elaborating further that India's rank in Global FDI was 8th and there are many attractive opportunities for investors in the Netherlands, such as in Agro-processing, Health Sector, Medical Tourism, Power sector including alternative energy, Tourism, ICT, Airports, etc. Mr. Gupta further narrated how India has been liberalizing its economy since 1991 and how many areas of public sector is also being opened to foreign investment, how the regulatory environment is also being simplified and how Indian business companies are meeting global standards.

Referring to the increasing Netherlands-India Trade, he informed audience about many Dutch business established in India and about the double taxation and other supporting treaties between the two countries. In this context he also mentioned the activities of the EU Chambers in India. Concluding, he stated that though that foreign investment in public utilities and stock exchange is not allowed and some restrictions remain in other sectors, the scope for bilateral activities is considerable.

Mr. Virat Dewanji, the Regional Director of the Kotak Mahindra Bank, informed the audience that the basic of Indian economy are strong and despite the trouble in finance sector of many countries, Indian banking system did not suffer much except that except that India's growth rate remained below that of China. He stated that NRIs can contribute to India's development in many ways such as – family remittances, banking facilities offered by SBI in some countries, parking money in Indian banks, buying equity, investing in mutual funds, insurance, etc. Stating that the Kotak Mahindra Bank is one of the youngest in the country but emphasized that it has more than 25 years of experience and ranks 4th largest commercial bank in the country and that it has a special Pravasi Bharatiya Programme for NRIs.

Mr. P.N. Prasad, CEO of the State Bank of India (Benelux) addressed the audience on the history and working of SBI as one of the biggest banks. He informed that the SBI has more than 260 years of banking experienced and is now represented in all 6 continents, with 18,000 branches and 250,000 staff. He further emphasized that they are present in 52 countries, most being in the Middle East. They are already in Antwerp but were also interested in setting up an office in the Netherlands. Mentioning that it took nearly two years to set up a branch in the Netherlands and also that the timing was not very opportune due to economic crisis in Europe. He invited the entrepreneurs in the audience to consult the website of SBI and get in touch with him for further details.

Drs. Vipin Moharir, Director, Nintec Ltd narrated to the audience his own experience of transition from being an employee to being a very successful entrepreneur. Narrating how after studying Business Management and working for some time in Dutch companies, he saw increasing opportunities for business between Netherlands and India in different sectors, particularly in ICT. He stated that he was very much impressed by the Dutch culture and their entrepreneurial spirit and decided to venture into it himself. Despite the risk involved in every enterprise, in his mind he was sure that he will make it.

Accordingly he sold his house and raised Euro 200,000 and started his company, *Nintec Ltd.*, as an ICT outsourcing enterprise which now has turnover of more than Euro 100 million and staff of over 10,000.

He was also impressed by the differences in the Indian and the Dutch context of economic development. According to him the Dutch are matter of fact, direct, insisting on timely delivery and the state environment is also supportive, with large small and medium size businesses involved in international trade, a fruitful public-private sector cooperation, and supportive institutions like the Dutch Chamber of Commerce and *NICCT*. He also enumerated his own strengths in the Dutch market as having honour and pride being an Indian as well as speaking good Dutch and being familiar with the Dutch norms and values, ability to recognize opportunities and enhance turnover gradually, develop together a team of young, experienced and motivated staff and emphasizing much more the HR aspects rather than the money alone. Also realizing its social responsibility the company also organized blood donation camps, adopted schools and slums and created awareness among elders for the use of computer. With these assets he was able to extend his activities to different sectors in the Netherlands as well as in other countries, most of which from the non-English speaking regions. Sectorally, activities covered E-learning, Healthcare, Automobile, Marketing and Communications, etc.

Interaction with audience

Mr. Didar Singh, Secretary, MOIA explaining the organization and functions of his ministry stated that their work is complimentary to many other government bodies focusing on the Indian Diaspora. Linking the themes of the two sessions of the morning and the present one, some related issues can be discussed. Referring to the importance of connectivity emphasized by Sujata Sudarshan, he stated that is what they do when they attend Diaspora Conferences. Similarly, they have an ongoing process of engagement with the Indian Diaspora through the PBD which is a biggest gathering of its kind. He further stated that they act as a bridge between Diaspora and India.

Referring to specific problems of Diaspora in the Netherlands, he mentioned about twice migration of Surinami Hindustanis, ideology of Diaspora and the impact of globalization on Diaspora. He then stated that there is now a reverse migration of Indians back to India due to rapid economic growth and increasing scope of income generation which numbered around 100,000 last year.

In the ensuing discussion a number of issues were raised such as what can be learnt about competitive advantage and innovation from the Small and Medium Sector businesses in comparison to multi-nationals, how the demographic dividend of India can be transformed into a well trained and motivated workforce, economic engagement with Diaspora does not mean that everyone needs to start business and people can contribute through other activities also like NGO related activities, scope of partnerships in the Netherlands which is more oriented towards middle term, and that often it is a case of being at the right place at the right time for success of an enterprise.

II – Youth Session

The moderator of the Session, Mr. Lavesh Lakhina introduced the speakers in the session and the importance of various topics presented by them. He then invited the first speaker **Ms Maheshwari Autar** to give her presentation. Ms. Autar, narrating the importance of media to the youth in the present context,

commented on some of the “inns and outs” of media. She elaborated further that the way the Dutch media covers India related events in the Netherlands as well as developments in India, influences the formation of India’s image in the minds of the Dutch people. Giving the example of distorted image of Lord Krishna given by some persons, she said that the members of Indian Diaspora should try to correct such distorted images by interacting in the media and providing clarification. She invited the youth not only to know about the media but also acquire some media skills. In this context she showed a video on how to get attention of audience. Informing the audience of her own involvement with different Diaspora organizations she recommended good relations with media with the help of professionals to improve image and influence of organizations in the society.

Drs. Darshdeep Baidwan, then shared his views on *Successful migration and integration in Dutch Society*, from a student’s perspective. Emphasizing the importance of knowing the Dutch Culture for all immigrants, Mr. Baidwan underlined the need for understanding the difference between the Indian and the Dutch culture which is essential for successful migration and integration with the host society. In this context he underlined the characteristics of the Dutch culture as individualism and equality, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society, unity in diversity, and stated that though the Indian culture also subscribes to many of these principles, there are nuances and subtle differences. Arguing that it is difficult for a migrant to be 100% Dutch and there is a need for two way traffic and bridges need to be built for bringing the two groups together. He further stressed that integration does not mean losing one’s identity. He concluded that he was proud to be an Indian and thinks that it is better to be an imperfect Dutch rather than not trying at all.

Amarnath Dhanpat, President of the Hindu Students’ Union, Rotterdam informed the audience that the union tries to safeguard the interests of Indian students at institutions of higher learning in the Netherlands and organizes cultural activities to promote their cultural heritage. Their activities are not restricted to the study of Hindu Dharma but also emphasize multiculturalism, professional ethics, etc. He narrated the type of activities organized by the Union including a *Seva Week*, annual congress, special gatherings and events, organization of internships in India and abroad.

Dr Pramod Agrawal, President ADHAR, then addressed the gathering on *Opportunities for Indian youth in the Netherlands*. Emphasizing the importance of entrepreneurship in the present, globalized context for the youth, he stated that in general, Indian parents do not want their children to be entrepreneur and advise them to seek salaried jobs instead. As an introduction to his own experience of shifting from academia to entrepreneurship, he maintained that entrepreneurs are not necessarily born so and can also be made. Stating that he came to the Netherlands for Ph D studies but in the course of time got involved in other activities also, like setting up ADHAR, a voluntary organization for supporting charitable activities in India. He was further impressed by the link between academia and the industry in the Netherlands which helped in financing of research which provided solutions to the problems of the industry. Based on this he thought it can be a good idea if Indian academics in the Netherlands join hands with the Small and Medium Enterprises in the Netherlands to avail of opportunities in the Netherlands and India.

Dr. Agrawal further found out that in the context of promoting a Knowledge Based Economy, four Dutch Government Agencies provided financial and other supports to innovators and entrepreneurs. He further

noticed that his company was supported by many Dutch companies in its efforts and that there are many things in business that you know only by doing.

Interaction with the audience

In the discussion following many issues came up for clarification, elaboration such as the need for cooperation between different generations, how to integrate and when is integration complete, is there a multicultural media, how the assistance given by Dutch Agencies work in reality, etc. Various speakers answered by responding that now a days there are special programmes for immigrants on teaching of Dutch language and its culture, whether one is integrated or not is a personal feeling and the reactions from the host community, that Indian Diaspora youth in general are not interested in media and as such we are less influential there, the assistance given by Dutch Agencies is in the form of subsidies which have to be returned, they provide secretarial assistance and also a possibility of interacting with the staff groups of universities and research institutions.

III – Women Session

The Women Session was conducted differently both with regard to the format and the contents as compared to other sessions. **Ms Viddhya Sampath**, Moderator of the group first conducted the session on the lower stage and not the main podium and organized it as an informal exchange of views between various members of the panel rather than each one formally addressing the audience. The main emphasis of the session was on “What Indian female Diaspora members can do to help Indian women from poor and disadvantaged groups”. The starting point was that women of Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands were in much better situation with regard to equality, access to education, jobs and family life but many of their counterparts in India are still fighting for their identity and the right to decide for themselves. As part of this, the Moderator first interviewed **Mrs. Henna Mathura**, President Foundation **SARITA** and **Dr. Jyotsna Gupta** about ‘service to the community’. A short film over the problems and difficulties of an ambitious woman maid-servant in a Mumbai school, prepared by film maker **Nandini Bedi** was screened. The Moderator interviewed Mrs Bedi, and a psychologist for mentally handicapped children, **Mrs. Rubina Anis**, member of the Indian Ladies Club, about the activities of the Ladies Club and how the problems of working women can be minimized through community help. **Mrs. Bedi** emphasized that women in India are becoming conscious of their identity and trying hard to improve their socio-economic status but in the absence of facilities and limited incomes have problems balancing their jobs along with household work and care of children and family members. **Mrs. Anis** stated that “We share and inspire each other” and try to project a good image of India and Indian women to the Dutch society. She narrated how the members of the Ladies Club exchange their experiences of living and in some cases working also in a foreign country and how they are also trying to help women in India through supporting NGOs and Charities in India who help Indian women from poor and disadvantaged groups. Asked on her relevance of work relating to mentally retarded children here to India, she replied that the policy and institutional support given to mentally retarded children in the Netherlands is excellent and that they have separate accommodation and care provided by the state, but the situation in India needs much improvement.

Also in the context of another short film about the views of an Indian female **Ms Mazumdar Shaw** CEO of a leading enterprise on what constitutes entrepreneurship, the Moderator interviewed **Prof. Dr. Sharda**

Nandram, President Women Wing, GOPIO, Netherlands and a *FCCI*, Trustee on her reaction to the film and how women entrepreneurs can compete effectively. Prof Nandram stated that there are 3 different types of entrepreneurship and emphasized the concept of *missionary entrepreneurship* which is becoming very important in the context of community building and which requires a different background and motivation. She further highlighted the importance of spiritualism, meditation and culture in entrepreneurship training and that in this she was very much inspired by the writings of **Swami Vivekanand** and **Kautilya**.

In answer to one of the questions raised by a member of the audience on the problem of foeticide in India, **Dr. Gupta** informed the audience that this problem exists in some developed countries like the UK also. She further stated that though there is a law since 1949 allowing abortion under certain conditions, very few are able to make use of it. Here the main problem is of making the target group aware of it and monitoring its actual implementation. In this context she also mentioned about her studies on this topic undertaken for the EHO and the World Bank

This was followed by interaction with the audience in which some questions were asked in Dutch and English regarding how women in the Netherlands can help women in India, how other ladies can become members of Indian Ladies Club, which were answered also in both English and Dutch languages.

Concluding Session: Chair H.E. Shri Vayalar Ravi, Minister MOIA

The purpose of the Concluding Session was to take stock of what was presented and discussed in different sessions of the Conference and highlight some common issues and draw some conclusions for continued action. For this purpose three Rapporteurs were appointed to report on different sessions and Prof. Dr. Pramod Saxena, former President of *FCCI* was also requested to give his overview on the theme of the Conference.

Introductory Remarks by Prof. Saxena

Prof. Pramod Saxena in his introductory comments defined the task of the Moderator to chair the proceedings, introduce the theme and mediate, in case of confusion or dispute. He further provided his own overview of the development of the two groups of Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands and how they came to the Netherlands at different times and different contexts. According to him both groups have made a good use of opportunities and facilities available in this country, though they have not come together as one Indian Diaspora group, till recently. On the issues of integration with the Dutch Society and maintaining own Indian culture, he stated that he claps both when the Dutch Football Team wins and also when the Indian Cricket Team wins, when they play against others. But if they are playing against each other, I may bet on India.

Talking about the role of Indian Diaspora and their contribution to the countries of their residence Prof. Saxena mentioned the Indian Diaspora is spread all over the world and has won great recognition for its contribution to the development of the host countries as well as to India, their mother land. Referring to the first generation Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands, Prof. Saxena mentioned that most of them are

very loyal to the country of their residence but also follow developments in India through the media and occasional visits.

Prof. Saxena presented a general picture of changing economic and social development in India and emphasized the rapid growth of its economy, its dynamic democracy, its multi-ethnic social structure, policy of non-violence and tolerance towards other religions, considerable development of science and technology, ICT, pharmaceuticals and other sectors. He concluded by stating that the combined efforts of both groups of Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands as in this Conference, can lead to their contribution to a much higher level.

Report on the Inaugural and Business Session – Dr. V. Moharir

Dr. Moharir stated that the Inaugural Session was excellent and the Business Session was really businesslike. He further stated that the two main themes which ran through various presentations were (i) Common Historical Heritage of India and the Netherlands and (ii) Synergy of coming together of the Indians from India and the Surinami Hindustanis. Whereas H.E. Minister Vayalar Ravi alluded to some vestiges of the Dutch settlement in his home state Kerala, narrated the services offered by his ministry to Indian Diaspora and appreciated the achievements and progress made by the Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands which is the second biggest community in Europe. Address of H.E. Ms Bhaswati Mukherjee describing the Netherlands and India as *two countries with common features* emphasized the rapidly growing relations between them in a number of sectors including trade, investment, higher education, culture, fashion, architecture, etc. She characterized the Indian Diaspora in The Netherlands as well organized, peaceful and prominent in the Dutch society and appreciated their contribution in “fostering better ties” between the two countries.

The Mayor of The Hague, H.E. Jozias van Aartsen speaking of *centuries old ties* between the two nations, narrated how India had been linked with the City of The Hague historically and even at present as The Hague being the main concentration of Surinami Hindustanis, and as a good example of *solidarity between the East and the West*. He appreciated contribution of Indian Diaspora in The Hague and its satellite towns and hoped that it will help in changing attitude of Dutch politicians towards India.

H.E. Ambassador Mr. Bob Hiensch’s presentation showed that nothing was lost by stopping the development cooperation relationship between the two countries in 2001 and the bilateral relations between them at present are much more comprehensive, spanning different sectors now with much scope to expand in future.

The First Plenary Session was devoted to the discussion of the main theme of the Conference, namely achievements, contributions and challenges of Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands. Presentations by Mr. Ram Lakhina and Drs. Badri Madan emphasized the small but highly educated and professionally experienced immigrant groups in the Netherlands occupying important positions in some professions and international organizations, constituting as a higher income group which has contributed richly both to India and the Netherlands. As examples of some challenges were mentioned increasing community’s representation in areas like politics, sports and media. Also some new areas like Maximizing Demographic Dividend of India for the mutual benefit of both countries were mentioned.

The presentations on the achievements and challenges of the Surinami Hindustanis by Drs. Rajindre Tewari, Ms Tanya Jagnanansing and Deputy Mayor of The Hague Mr. Rabin Baldewsingh emphasized considerable progress made by the community despite double migration from India to Surinam and then to the Netherlands in a short period. Stressing that the community, particularly its second generation, has made good use of facilities available in the Netherlands. As a result they are very well represented in many sectors of the Dutch society except in politics, sports, media, civil service, etc. As challenges attracting young generation to politics through special programmes, encouraging youth to become entrepreneurs, increasing interaction with other immigrant groups, etc. were mentioned.

The main emphasis in the **Business Session** was on two main areas, namely how Diaspora members can become successful entrepreneurs in the Netherlands and what services in this the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) and the banking sector of India can offer. The presentations of the Senior officials of MOIA clarified for the audience the role and functioning of the important institution of Overseas Indians Facilitation Centre (OIFC) as a one stop agency to provide information and act as a catalyst for NRIs/PIOs in financial transfers, investment, buying of property, etc. Mr. P.N. Prasad, CEO State Bank of India (Benelux) informed that its branch in the Netherlands was going to start functioning soon with a variety of services to investors and others.

The presentations of Dr. Pramod Agrawal and Drs. Vipin Moharir showed how they made a successful transition from working for others to become entrepreneurs themselves in the Netherlands. Both emphasized the help and support available in the country for new entrepreneurs and using in actual practice what one has learnt about management. Building networks and good human relations were mentioned as key factors in success.

Report on the Youth Session by Vishal Solanki

Reporting on the Youth Session, Mr. **Solanki** stated that the Session started to discuss “How can the Indian Diaspora community, especially the youth be noticed by the Dutch Media organizations and how it can influence the media?” He further reported that **Ms Autar**, herself being a media consultant, spoke about how the Hindustani youth and the Diaspora related organizations can harness the power of media to get their message across, to maximize optimum impact on society and to project a positive image of the community. Arguing that “influence may be the highest level of human skills”, Ms. Autar gave two examples in support of this. Mr. **Darshdeep Baidwan**, based on his own experience of integration with the host Dutch society. He emphasized the need for successful migration and integration with the Dutch society to be able avail fully of opportunities available here and the role of the individual in adapting to the Dutch culture. He also informed about the role which government and non-government agencies can play in enhancing the process of integration of the immigrants.

Mr. **Amarnath Dhanpat** narrated also the activities undertaken by the Hindu Students’ Forum Netherlands to *empower the Indian youth in the Netherlands*, which confirmed the advantage of building the community starting from the students. Mr. Solanki further reported on the last but not the least important presentation of **Dr. Pramod Agrawal**, president of *AADHAR*, Agrawal, who is the founder of *ECOLAB* also in which he shared his experience on the *opportunities for the Indian students in the Netherlands to become entrepreneurs*. He described his transition from a student to a researcher and ultimately as a successful entrepreneur, thanks to various facilities and financial support available in the

Netherlands. Emphasizing the interest of the Indian youth in the Netherlands to preserve their cultural heritage, Mr. Solanki quoted the popular saying "only if youth could do, what old age knew", and emphasized the need for the seniors to support, guidance and blessings for them.

Report on the Women Session by Satarupa Bose Roy

According to the Hindu mythology women are the source of all power. They are born fighters, continuously fighting for their identity, fighting for their own fate: as Rabindranath Tagore said: "Women should be given the right to win their own fate." And, indeed so, today traversing the path towards a new era of change of global economy, we have seen women achieving what exactly they wanted to. The new age women, or if we call them the Diaspora women, they have proved themselves by making their ground strong. They had opportunity; they had self confidence, education, and the means to make them strong and virtuous. We proudly distinguish them as the Diaspora women. Their works, their thoughts have changed lives.

But, they are few in number. The women in India do not have the means to make their ground strong: they are reared on the bed of sorrows. They are overburdened with poverty, lack of education, poor health and so many other gnawing problems that India rears in its pores.

Thus, ladies and gentlemen, it is time for such an awakening; it is time when we Diaspora women not only make a podium for ourselves but also think about them too - the hapless women who need your help, our help. They have hope, they have dream, they are ambitious but they do not have the opportunity, the means to fulfil such a dream, a dream of better living, a dream to have a life of respect. Ladies and gentlemen, it is time to extend a hand of help, share a heart full of compassion and do something fruitful to help them have a better life. This podium is one such where we can together make a promise to give the unfortunate ones a better living, a better future. Thank you.

(A detailed report on each of the presentations in the Women Session is already given earlier in this document. Here only the substance of the main theme and its spirit is reported on).

Concluding Remarks by the Chairman, Hon'ble Minister Vayalar Ravi

Minister Vayalar Ravi expressed his satisfaction with the successful organization of the Indian Diaspora Conference attended by many and stated that it was beyond his expectation. He was very much impressed the way in which organizations of both Diaspora groups planned and executed together this conference which also focused well on the youth and women of the community. He particularly stressed the fact that the Indian Diaspora has financed the event with their own resources with liberal help from the Hon'ble Mayor of The Hague. He was also glad to know the progress made by both the groups in different sectors of the Dutch society and especially glad to see on the podium a woman Surinami Hindustani member of the Dutch parliament. Emphasizing the importance of mastering the language of the host community in successful integration he further underlined the need for loyalty to the host country while retaining respect for its own culture.

Referring to different ideas expressed in the conference on contributions of Indian Diaspora to India's economic and social development, he pointed towards various facilities provided by his ministry which help in this process. He praised the cultural programme planned for the evening and the artists participating in that. He thanked also all organizations participating in the event and invited all those present to attend the forthcoming *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* in Jaipur in January 2012.

Cultural Programme: 17:45 – 19:45

(Coordinated by Mr. Suresh Chotoe)

Impressions of a beautiful morning by Dance Company Madhuri (DCM)

The Cultural Programme started with a 10 minute long *Tilana Fusion* presentation consisting of dances depicting the culture of various parts of India against a beautiful backdrop of four young dancers dancing the same dance on the screen. This was very much appreciated by the audience and thanks for this were given to the leadership of very popular Dance Company Aarti (DCA)

Introduction of the Chief Guest by Rajen Ramnath

Mr. Rajen Ramnath, President *Shon*, Ex-President *EEKTA* and Treasurer, *FIDE* welcomed H.E. Ms Bhaswati Mukherjee, Ambassador of India and all participants and introduced the Chief Guest of the Cultural Programme, Hon'ble Rabin Baldevwsingh, Acting Mayor of The Hague. He further stated that the Surinami Hindustani Community is a young community in the Netherlands which has made considerable progress in different sectors of the Dutch society. Also they have maintained their Indian cultural heritage as well as integrated with the Dutch host community adopting main values and norms of that society. Mr. Rajen Ramnath gave the audience the details of the rest of the cultural programme which was coordinated by Mr. **Suresh Chotoe, Chairman, Milan Mela Zuiderpark and Arti Jagmohan.**

Speech of the Chief Guest Rabin Baldewsingh

The Chief guest briefly narrated the progress made by the Surinami Hindustani community, particularly in the art and culture of India. He also narrated the good work done by a number of community organizations including the Surinam House and *Seva* Network in promoting integration with the Dutch society as well as promoting welfare and wellbeing of the Hindustan Surinami community. The community had organized meetings and conferences from time to time, collected statistical and other data on the community and a good deal of literature by Surinami Hindustanis has also become available. The community has maintained their link with their roots in India and many of them have visited India a number of times. Many Surinami Hindustani do short internships in India to know it much better. He also informed the audience about the translation of stories of *Shantiniketan* and the poems of *Rabindranath Tagore* in Dutch. He concluded his speech by singing one of the poems of Tagore.

Music and Songs by Moushmi Oberoi and Party

Ms Moushmi Oberoi and Party from Kolkata kept the audience spellbound by their beautiful rendering of very popular Bollywood songs in slow and fast rhythm, particularly sung by Lata Mangeshkar, Kishore Kumar and others, against the backdrop of changing scenes of monuments like Khajuraho and some

public places from India, which made the audience very homesick. She also sang a Bengali song of Tagore in which Madam Ambassador also joined in. On a special request by Madam Ambassador, Ms. Moushmi Oberoi also sang a very popular Bollywood Song, very apt for the occasion, namely *Aajare Pardesi*, calling Indians abroad to come back home!.

This was followed by a solo Bollywood song sung by **Mona Siddiqui** which was very much appreciated by the audience for her remarkable voice. This solo performance was followed up by a grand presentation of very colourful and energetic Tribal and Gujrati Dances, Mayachandra and Dandia, played by Radha and Krishna by the **DCM group**. The scenes of temples, mosques and famous structures on the background screen made people feel at home. The audio visual impact of the presentation was so good that for the moment the audience found themselves on the Indian planet!

Kalpna Raghuraman has established herself as one of the pioneers in introducing Indian Classical and modern dancing in the Netherlands. One can expect something new from her at every occasion. This time she provided a modern dance, *Through the eyes of my city*, by the groups of her Indian and Dutch students, with an English and an Indian song “*Taal se taal milao*”. and the changing panorama of the City of The Hague in the background. Hon’ble Mayor of The Hague and some staff of The Hague present in the audience must have found this way of promoting the City very eye-catching.

A two hour non-stop programme of song and dance needed a respite which was provided by a *Musical intermezzo* by *Rishi Dhir* consisting of instrumental and vocal music, with *Wahid Nawrouzi* providing very appropriate accompaniment on *Tabla* (percussion).

The next item of the programme by **DCM** consisting of “*Mere Dholna*” and contemporary dance brought back the audience to the theatre promptly. This palace dance paying tribute to love with admirable choreography was presented on the stage very effectively with a group of women dancers dancing on the main stage and another group of women dancers also presenting it on the screen, with the Majestic Jodhpur Palace, in the background. It was really a great feat in synchronization as the two presentations of the same steps one live and one on screen was a feast for eyes and ears!

Baithak-gana Swastika & Ensemble which followed, provided a change from the most of the earlier presentations which were contemporary and fusion type. This was a vocal music recital of traditional songs in vernacular led by **Dawinder Sewnath** with harmonium and tabla. This was accompanied by a traditional dance also by **Dancetrio Excellent moves Ensemble**. Its impact on the audience was very much enhanced by the scenes of Surinam including the Paramaribo Harbour and Surinam Airways on the screen. This was appreciated very much, particularly by the senior Surinami Hindustanis who must have felt nostalgic

The closing piece of the Cultural Evening was a performance of *Rajasthani* and *Billu Bhayankar*, a rich and joyful dance with acrobatics and tricks by the **DCM Group**. This was followed by the *grand finale* in which all the dancers participated. The audience indicated their appreciation by giving them a standing ovation.

Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks by Mr. Jasbir Singh.

Mr. **Jasbir Singh**, Chairman of the Organizing Committee, concluded the Day's Programme by stating that the Conference was a great success and a number of interesting and thought provoking presentations were made on the considerable progress made by both groups of Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands as well as on the challenges facing them in further advancement. The Conference also showed that the two communities are coming together fast and will be able to make more substantive contributions both to the country of their residence and to India, their motherland. He was also very happy that this time both youth and women of the community could discuss their specific issues and participants numbering more than 300 from different age groups, professional background and different periods of stay in the Netherlands took part. Discussions which followed raised also interesting issues facing the community, promptly replied by speakers and in some cases by the Hon'ble Minister of MOIA and his senior administrators. The icing on the cake was the two hour fantastic Cultural Extravaganza, with outstanding performances by many artists.

All this was not possible without the active help, encouragement and support by the Hon'ble MOIA Minister, Mr. Vayalar Ravi and his senior administrators, H.E. Mr. Jozias van Aartsen, Mayor of The Hague, H.E. Ms. Bhaswati Mukherjee, Ambassador of India, H.E. Mr. Bob Hiensch, Ambassador of the Netherlands to India. Mr. Singh thanked them all and hoped that the Indian Diaspora Community will continue to get their support in future also. He also wanted to put on record the tremendous work done by the members of the organizing committee and other committees appointed for specific activities which resulted in such a well planned and well presented day long programme. A lot of work and preparation was done also by the various moderators and speakers in different sessions which made each session successful and focused attention on important issues. He thanked all of them very profusely. However, all our tiredness was removed by the Cultural Extravaganza which followed the main part of the conference. It provided a good mix of Indian Bollywood and Surinami Hindustani music and dance, at a high professional level with fabulous dresses, spot lights in different colours and breathtaking scenes of India and Surinam on the back screen. Mr. Jasbir Singh specially thanked the master of ceremony, Ms. Rashmi Sharma and Mr. Suresh Chotoe, Chairman, Milan Festival Zuiderpark who coordinated different parts of the very enjoyable evening. He thanked all artists both on the stage and behind the stage as well as all staff members of the World Centre who provided all facilities in the building. Finally he thanked all participants who sat through a long day of deliberations and took active part during the interactive sessions. He promised the audience to continue this annual event with support and encouragement from both sections of the community and told them he would be looking forward to welcoming all of them next year again.
