

CONNECT

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IndoDutch Relations A Great Year Past

Trade and commercial relations between India and The Netherlands have seen a steady positive influx since 1940s with a further strengthening of mutual ties

after India's economic liberalisation in the 90s. 2011 too has seen an resurgence in bilateral relationships between India and The Netherlands in various areas like trade and investment, science and technology, information and communication technology, education and culture. Anuradha Gupta of the West Holland Foreign Investment Agency (WFIA) shares with us some important bi-lateral milestones of the year gone by, that firmly indicate that both India and The Netherlands see each other as strategic economic partners.



The relationship between India and The Netherlands stretches as far back as 1602 when the chartered company, The Dutch East India Company was established and the States-General of the Netherlands granted it a 21-year monopoly to carry out colonial activities in Asia. This company flourished for almost two centuries but was finally dissolved due to bankruptcy as a result of corruption. Although the Dutch East India Company was no longer in existence since late 18th century, this was the start of an ongoing trade relationship that has evolved and strengthened through the centuries.

Visions and missions

Since the beginning of the year there have been several trade missions and business relations established between The Netherlands and India. A number of high-level official visits have taken place including visits by Dutch Minister of Infrastructure & Environment as well as by Mayors of Rotterdam and Amsterdam and Vice Mayor of The Hague with delegations. Foreign Minister Prof. Dr. Uri Rosenthal made an official visit to India at the invitation of Hon'ble External Affairs Minister Shri S.M. Krishna where opportunities for Dutch investments in logistics, water management and communications were discussed. Minister Rosenthal also met with the NSA to discuss issues of strategic importance.

MOUs

During these visits, several MOUs were also signed between The Netherlands and India this year, including but not limited to:

Ado Den Haag, a club based in the Netherlands, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Haryana Football Association and FICCI to help the state improve and popularise the sport.

PHD and PUM signed an MoU to establish a partnership to offer mutual assistance in organizing various activities with a view to promote business opportunities in Netherlands for Indian SMEs and conduct expert missions to enhance the quality and productivity to maintain close and regular contacts with the aim of exchanging information and publications on general understanding of the market and investment situation in their respective countries in respect of SMEs.

A Government to Government MoU for Corporate Social Responsibility was signed in June 2011 establishing a working group aimed at exchange of expertise, views and experiences of governments and stakeholders.

A MoU was signed in December 2011 on various areas concerning shipping and port sectors. The MoU was signed by the Minister of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways Thiru T.R. Baalu on behalf of India, and Mrs. Schulz van Haegen, Minister of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, on behalf of Netherlands. The MoU envisages cooperation in the fields of port planning and development; maritime transport and logistics; shipbuilding; research and development; safety and security, and stimulation of cargo flows between the two countries.

New investors from India

In April – May 2011 two Mumbai based companies Tata Interactive Systems and Geodesic opened up their branches in the West-Holland region. Both companies were assisted in this by WFIA (West-Holland Foreign Investment Agency) – a Netherlands government initiative to promote trade promotions from foreign countries into Western Holland (The Hague, Leiden). Apart from this the NFIA (Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency) and WFIA are in talks with several other companies which are on the verge of beginning their European operations.

Stronger bonds with India

On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Netherlands honoured the memory of Gandhiji in a very special manner with the opening of the Indian Cultural Centre named after him in the city of The Hague. The Gandhi Centre was inaugurated by Dr. Karan Singh, MP and President of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) in the presence of Mr. Jozias van Aartsen, Mayor of The Hague. The Gandhi Centre is a tribute to the Mahatma's ideals of peace and non violence.

In August 2011, the Dutch Design Fashion Architecture (DDFA) funded by Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation and partners with Premseela, NAI, BNO, BNA, BNI and MODINT took the decision to open up a Workspace in India. The primary focus of the Workspace is to facilitate a cultural dialogue between Dutch and Indian designers across the entire spectrum of design and to promote the Dutch design community in India. The Workspace is located in Parel, Mumbai which is fast emerging as a hotspot for the Indian design community and is slated to open early February.

After an overwhelming response to the Pravasi Bhartiya Divas – Europe in September 2009, the representatives of the Indian Diaspora organizations in The Netherlands organized the first Netherlands edition of the Annual Diaspora Conference in September 2011 at the World Forum in The Hague. The theme of the IDC was "Indian Diaspora in Netherlands: Achievements, Contributions & Challenges". Distinguished speakers from all sections of the Diaspora in the Netherlands, the representatives of the Government of India and prominent Dutch dignitaries, addressed on various aspects of this theme.

The relationship between The Netherlands and India has grown from strength to strength. Over the years several Dutch multinationals and major companies such as Philips, Shell, ABN Amro, Unilever and Heineken have set up flourishing practices in India and several Indian companies including major IT companies like TCS, Tata Steel, Mahindra Satyam have established their presence in The Netherlands. With strong bilateral relations and an ongoing enhanced dialogue India and The Netherlands are constantly collaborating to strengthen and expand the framework of co-operation and create a mutually beneficial partnership that will continue to create new in-roads across the entire spectrum of business and trade.
